CEMBER

THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

Talbot Mundy
Leonard H. Nason
John Webb
Gordon Young
George E. Holt
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2 Complete Novelettes

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Four Complete Novelettes

WHEN *Jarl Rognvald* sailed away in his dragon-ship to conquer Jerusalem, the ruler he left behind in the Orkneys allied himself with *Swain's* deadly foe. Whereupon *Swain* determined to find a Jarl of his own, and mustered his ships. All that Winter throughout the tortuous straits of the islands dragons roved with smoking oar-locks, and swords clashed on the beaches of barren lands. "SWAIN JARLMAKER," a complete novelette, by Arthur D. Howden Smith in the next issue.

"IN OTHER words, old dear," said *Alfred*, "I am the bacterium in the test tube and you are the scientist." But *Markley* was a much more dangerous person than a scientist. He was a trader who would resort to the most desperate measures to remove a competitor from this South Sea island on which he ruled the natives like a king. And all that *Alfred*, his competitor, knew of combating treachery and bloodshed had been learned in the studios of Washington Square. "WHEN THE GODS FAILED," by J. D. Newsom, is a complete novelette in the next issue.

KINGSLEY had stolen rice-cakes and a Japanese prison awaited him. *Hearfield*, the consul, refused to help him; tried, on the contrary, for private reasons, to make his punishment more severe. But *Gilbert Clark*—the fighting priest—had information which he kept to himself until the right time came. "MOTHER OF BEGGARS," a complete novelette, by Sydney Herschel Small in the next issue.

WHEN *Stitt* was taken out of the routine police service to play a part in the *Flaudreau's* spirit-show, he didn't know that he would be suspected of causing *John Brandage's* death. But he played the part more dramatically because of the suspicion. "THE GHOST INTRIGUE," by Conroy Kroder, a complete novelette of gangsters and their hunters in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

***Adventure* is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**

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Adventure
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MOHAMMED'S TOOTH

A COMPLETE NOVEL

By Talbot Mundy

Author of "The Marriage of Meldrum Strange," "Diana Against Ephesians," etc.

"India is rich. Let her buy peace!"

THEY kept this out of the papers at the time, there being a fine-meshed censorship. Enough months have elapsed since, and enough events have happened to smoke-screen this one as effectually as if Julius Cæsar and the Gauls had played the leading parts. The prince went home alive. India resumed worrying about the price of homespun cotton, the next monsoon, and whether rupee-paper was likely to rise or fall. The *Pioneer* found front-page space for an account of spooks in a planter's bungalow. They even resumed printing the divorce news. All was well again.

"Set it down, why don't you?" King said; and Grim nodded.

I demurred. Either King or Grim could have told the story better. But as they sat on the end of my bed in the little white-washed ward, the one cleaning spurs and the other re-splicing the wire-woven handle of a Persian simitar, it was small use arguing with them.

King's excuse, that he had sore fingers and could not punch a typewriter, was possibly half-valid. It was why he was cleaning spurs, for instance, instead of playing polo to get fit for the next adventure fate might hold in store for him. Grim's argument, that he should not write the account because he had a hand in the affair, was even more ridiculous but just as useful, since it cloaked his incurable delight in doing lots and saying less than nothing. What he does say usually adds to his obscurity.

"Write it, and omit me," Grim suggested.

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But you might as well omit *Hamlet* from the play.

Well: here I am, with a month of convalescence still ahead, sore from head to foot, sick of reading, and more sick of the Peshawar climate, hospital diet, the squeak of a punkah, and the view of Allah's "Slag-heap" from the window. So they've set a table in a corner where the flap of the punkah won't scatter the paper all over the place. My jaw being bandaged, the sweat in all likelihood won't drop down and make the ink run. Lord knows there's paper enough; the genial sawbones who runs this outfit—between bouts of preaching to wounded border-thieves—seems to think I propose to rewrite the Encyclopædia—or one of his sermons. He has lent me his dictionary, and a big jar of tobacco. Here begins—

JOAN ANGELA came to India. That's the prelude to anything whatever except commonplace. I believe she is twenty-six. I will bet she has twenty-six hundred admirers, including me, who would like to act Herod and kill off eligibles, to destroy beforehand the inevitable lucky, as yet unknown, blade who will some day persuade her to marry. And I dare say twenty-six million dollars would look rather small beside her fortune since they brought in oil on her land in California. Not that that matters; she would be Joan Angela Leich if she had only twenty-six cents.

She came because the prince's visit was spectacular, and when we're young most of us will go a long way to see a circus. But it soon palled. The home papers got wind of it, too, and drew conclusions, the prince being a bachelor about her age. So she cut the round of visits and started to see India for herself, without so much as a by-your-leave or a hint to the Indian Government, which was a great deal too busy to notice much that wasn't obviously dangerous.

In such times Governments fall back on odds and ends of stray resources. Undesirables get short shrift, with apologies in the proper quarter later on—if called for. Men whose courses up and down the earth will bear investigation find surprizing details forced on them, without much explanation and no insurance. You carry unexpected overloads at your own expense and risk, with no more reward than any decent fellow gets, who likes not to grudge the gift of manliness and muscle.

So Athelstan King, James Schuyler Grim and I—an Englishman and two Americans—with Narayan Singh, who is a Sikh and was a sepoy once, were under canvas by the left bank of Jhelum River, swatting flies, smoking more than was wholesome, and wishing the prince were in care of Scotland Yard.

There was a brigade of Indian cavalry camped on our left hand, about two miles away; we could hear the horses neighing, as bored as we felt. On our right, two miles away again, was a regiment of Bombay infantry. And there was a rumor to the effect that the cavalry were there as much to watch the infantry as to keep a sharp eye on the border. But rumors are rife, and the fact that a Bombay regiment had been ordered north was no proof that its ranks had been corrupted. The men had their rifles. There was ammunition. The officers looked more or less at ease, with long legs sticking out from under home newspapers beneath the awnings, and all routine as usual.

To our rear, ten miles away, was a fairly strong contingent of the Air Force, with cavalry and infantry to guard them from prowling border-thieves. Their planes were growling constantly in search of a reported *lashkar** of Pathans. Spies—every one is a potential spy for either side across the border—had brought word that the tribes were concentrating and admiring the notion of a row. The *mullahs* were said to be haranguing them, and the women were carrying about a month's supply of food and fuel.

However, the airmen kept reporting they could see nothing, their cameras told the same tale; and that meant either one of several probabilities—or all combined.

It was possible the spies were deliberately arousing false expectations of a raid in that quarter, in order to cover extensive preparations elsewhere. Or, the tribes might have learned how to conceal themselves from the airmen, which should not be very difficult among those rocks and gorges, or even in the open, where the harsh grass in the distance resembled sea with wind across the tide.

The other probability lay in the rear. Raids from over that Northwest Frontier

*Body of armed men.

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have been so frequent for a thousand years that an incursion was no more unlikely than rain is in some lands. It would be good strategy for folk who contemplated an uprising on the Indian side of the border to broadcast rumors of Pathan activity and so keep the military alert in the wrong quarter.

However, danger of an uprising, and especially of concerted action between the Tribes and the disaffected Punjab, presupposes leadership and some lines of communication; which was how we came to be there. Athelstan King, who was a colonel until recently, is supposed to understand that border better than the fiends do, who built it, and the fiends' offspring, who brew —— there.

Jim Grim knows Arabs better, but has made himself a name in India too. I am their friend, which sufficiently accounts for me; they rang me in on it. Narayan Singh would rather risk his neck in Grim's company than be a maharaja.

We looked peaceful and innocent enough. In fact we were a baited trap. Our servants, knowing no better, told the world at large I was leader of a party contemplating an expedition into Persia—untruth sufficient to account for trade-goods lying loose in process of repacking, and for our incessant inquiries about camels, interpreters, guides, and what not else.

Great hairy ruffians oiled themselves and crept along the streams of mist at night to steal those trade-goods. One by one we caught them; for we had pitched camp by a deep, narrow nullah up which they were certain to come; barbed-wire, broken glass, some dogs, and two acetylene searchlights made any other approach almost impossible. We noosed some, clubbed others, and caught a round half-dozen in a blunted bear-trap. Narayan Singh was fertile in new expedients; but as to the outcome, we treated all alike.

As soon as they recovered from the usually necessary man-handling we set them on their hunkers in a tent and talked the situation over, offering them liberty, and promising reward if they would put us in communication with a certain Kangra Khan.

"We're Americans," King would explain, telling two thirds of the truth, which was plenty. "We don't want our business known." That was absolutely true, and also plenty, since whatever we had said our real business was they would not have believed us. "We have a proposal that will interest Kangra Khan. If he will come to us here, with no more than a two-man escort we will guarantee his personal safety."

They believed the last implicitly. That part of the game has always been played straight by the men who hold the borderline, and generally, too, by the wind-weaned rascals whose profitable sport it is to violate line, life, women and most promises whenever possible. A verbal safe-conduct is as good as a Chinaman's acceptance—flood, fire and act of God alone excepted from the guarantee.

So on the eleventh night after we pitched camp the dogs barked furiously, as they would not have done if there had been a miscreant sneaking up the nullah. This was some one taking chances from the west, where by day we used to open a gap in the barbed-wire tangle. We turned a spotlight on, and after a curt exchange of challenge and reply we saw him rise like a bear, dripping wet, out of a wisp of gray mist. His boat must have upset crossing the river.

Narayan Singh opened a gap in the wire, and he strode in with a British service-rifle in one hand and the other held over his eyes because the light dazzled him. A fine, upstanding man he was, and I like that sort. His dripping sheepskin jacket increased an air of cavalierly independence; but it stank like the deuce, and King invited him to take it off and hang it on a stick in front of the fire to dry. He did that, but remained standing with his back toward the river, so I motioned him toward a chair on the other side of the fire, between Grim and me.

"By Allah," he answered, opening a great gap of a grin in the midst of his black beard, "if my men should lose sight of me I might die with you, and I have business elsewhere! It is not so easy aiming in the dark."

So I set the chair where his men could see him in the firelight; and the first thing he demanded when he sat down—awkwardly, unused to canvas chairs—was a rag and some oil for his wet rifle.

Narayan Singh, next on his left, offered to dry the rifle for him.

"I will leave my life in a Sikh's hands when I have no more use for it!" Kangra

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Khan answered, and then waited, saying nothing, until Grim fetched him oil and rags.

Thereafter he cleaned while he talked, squinting down the barrel at the firelight. I judged him a man of forethought and determination, to be trusted unconditionally in some ways, not at all in others, the latter perhaps predominating.

He was nearly as heavy as I am. And he was handsome, for his nose was not so hooked, nor his eye so cunning as is usual along that frontier. The edge of a coil of black hair showed beneath his turban. His forehead was a thinker's, broad and level, with two heavy lines across it. First and last, there was nothing about him that suggested cowardice or even respect for heavy odds.

"They said, you have a tale for me. And so, by Allah, I am here. I listen," he said simply, all eyes for me.

They like big men where he came from, and I wore a beard at that time, which was another point in my favor. However, King took up the argument—since argument there must be in the North, whatever else happens.

"The tale is this," he said, leaning forward to knock the ashes out of his pipe; and with his dark skin and Roman nose he looked in the firelight like one of Julius Cæsar's men, "that you, Kangra Khan, are planning a raid while the prince is in this part of India; and that I am told off to prevent you."

He sat back, and filled his pipe again. He might have just remarked it was a fine night.

"Then by Allah's Prophet, thou and I are well met!" the Hillman answered, showing his yellow teeth again.

King struck a match.

"So now we understand each other," he said, puffing away at the pipe.

"Maybe. But it is Allah who prevents!" said Kangra Khan, with his eye on my servant, who was bringing out whisky from the tent.

I poured him a straight tumbler-full, and he tossed it off at a gulp.

"The river was wet, and not warm," he remarked by way of thanks, offering no apology for drinking in defiance of the Koran; for which I liked him.

Apology and explanation are due to one you may have injured; otherwise they are indecent. He said nothing about how he had managed to swim the hurrying Jhelum, rifle in hand.

"Why should you choose this particular time?" King demanded, sailing as close to the eye of the wind as he could carry way.

"It is a good time," the Hillman answered simply.

Neither seemed inclined to ease his helm. They were coming at each other head on, so at a whisper from Grim I strode among the shadows and ordered the servants out of ear-shot.

"It is the worst time you could choose," King assured him.

"The eagle's opportunity—the hare's disadvantage—are one!" said Kangra Khan.

"You are not dealing with hares," King retorted. "You are blind if you think the eagles are not on our side."

"Aye, I have seen them. They have buzzed above us now for half a month."

"They lay eggs on the wing, those birds!" King suggested meaningly. "There is cavalry and infantry to right and left of us; and guns at the rear."

"Aye, but this is women's talk. I know the chances," Kangra Khan answered.

"Talk like a man then!" growled Narayan Singh.

It seemed to me that that was what the Hillman had done, but the Sikh knew what he was doing.

"Meet me across the border, and I will show thee how a man fights!" the other retorted.

Narayan Singh was about to answer, but Grim interrupted him.

"None will talk if the time for fighting comes. Talk like a man first," he advised him, and Kangra Khan nodded.

"My men are restless. They lost too much in the fighting of a year ago. The crops have been poor. There will be a hard winter unless we rape a town or two. They look to me to lead them."

"Why not tell the whole truth?" King demanded. "Some one has promised if you lead a raid, the Punjabis will rise simultaneously. Isn't that so?"

"By Allah, little *sahib*, you know too much," the Hillman answered, laughing.

"I think I know the name of the man who made you that offer, but never mind," King continued. "What did he offer you?"

"He talked like a plainsman, deceiving none but himself. He offered me the prince!

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He promised we may take him and hold him for ransom, after they have burned his camp and done the capturing. He said, with truth, although the fat pig lied nine other ways, that to keep the prince hidden in the Punjab would be impossible, whereas among our mountains——"

"Why talk nonsense?" King interrupted. "He's trying to use you for catspaw!"

"Truly. But he who uses fire may just as well be burnt, and I like Punjab money," said Kangra Khan.

"The prince will be well guarded," King said.

"Aye—*inshallah!** The British are not so mad as to leave the boy unprotected. However, he comes Northward for a hundred days—days of trouble, unless I am well paid to keep still."

Well: that was frank enough. There was not so much cupidity as calm appreciation in the Hillman's eye. He seemed willing enough to barter his advantage for a fair price. As he finished cleaning his rifle, and laid it across his knees with the sort of affectionate slap a man bestows on a dog or a horse, he looked at least as worthy to be dealt with as any of those diplomatists who play the international game with marked cards.

"How much do you want?" King asked him.

"A *crore*, and no less," he said instantly.

A *crore* of rupees is a third of a million dollars and King laughed.

"That would pay for quite a nice campaign," he answered. "You Hillmen are like children when money is mentioned."

"India is rich. Let her buy peace!"

"You won't get as much as a *lakh*.† You won't get anything, unless you give proof," King assured him. "Call this raid off. Tell the Punjabis you'll give them no assistance. Give me your word of honor. Then I'll get you money from the Government. I don't know how much. You'll have to trust me to do my best."

"Aye, King sahib. None doubts your *izzat*;‡ but what of mine? The fat Punjabi is a pig, but I will not betray him. By Allah, if he comes to talk with me and the troops pounce on him, what then?"

"He shall have safe conduct."

"Aye, but after, you will know who he is, and——"

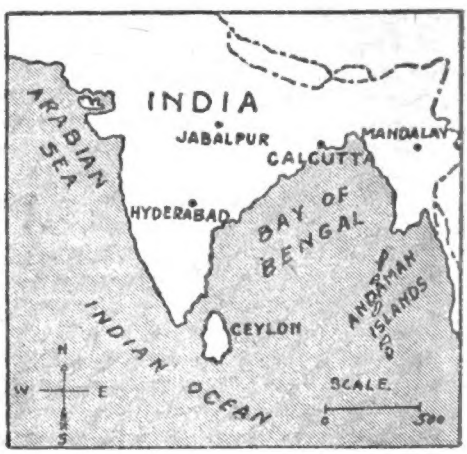
"I know already!"

"If thou art not a liar, name him!"

"He is no Punjabi. His name is Ali Babul," King answered promptly. "Isn't that so?"

Kangra Khan said nothing. In the ensuing silence Grim leaned sideways, better to study the Hillman's face. It was Narayan Singh who took up the argument, opening and shutting his right hand so that the knuckles cracked almost like a pistol-shot.

"I, too, know Ali Babul. As thou sayest, he is fat. Caution him, Hillman! For if I make a feud with a man he will die. By my *Guru's** honor, he shall not live; his fat



shall feed crows—unless thy wisdom forewarns him! I have made the prince's life my personal affair."

"I have heard words. They are principally wind, smelling of onions," said the Hillman.

He was well aware that we would not sit there offering him terms, if there had been any easier or less expensive course open to the Government just then, only business acumen prevented him from insulting the Sikh beyond recall, and even that element of self-control was weakening, as the Sikh had foreseen. He prodded if further. "The truth is, you are afraid to refuse Ali Babul," he asserted, with an air of absolute conviction.

"At least I am not afraid of thee, thou——"

"Shame that such a hairy man should fear a shaven, swag-bellied *bunnia!*"

"Allah!"

*If God wills.
†One hundred thousand.
‡A difficult word to translate. In this case, "Good faith."

*Teacher's.

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"See him then, and warn him, if you aren't afraid to," King suggested, intervening.

There could hardly have been bloodshed there before our fire; but the border laws of guest and host do not preclude commencement of hostilities the minute the threshold is left behind. Sikh and Hillman love each other as dog and jackal do—not much.

"There have first to be promises."

The Hillman looked in King's eyes, reading there good faith, but not much else; for there was little King might promise without referring to headquarters.

"I will do my best about the money for you," King said.

"I, too, then about Ali Babul. And how much is that? Bring the brute here. Give us both safe conduct. I will talk with him tomorrow night, at this hour, before this fire in the *Huzoor's* presence. But if the Government were not afraid for its skin it would have scoughed up Ali Babul long ago," the Hillman added.

There were elements of truth in that suggestion, and the only plausible retort would have been a boast, which in turn might have cut short negotiations.

"Would Ali Babul come?" Grim asked.

"Aye! For I will bring him!" said Narayan Singh.

King nodded. Whatever Narayan Singh might undertake to do would be carried out unless he died in the attempt, and not even Kangra Khan questioned that outcome. But I was watching the Hillman's face, questioning that, and I noticed Grim did the same thing. There was deep, unspoken thought there, and his eyes were too bright to mean anything but mischief.

"Hadn't we better define things more exactly?" I proposed in English.

So we tried, but the uselessness was fairly evident at once. It was like bargaining with a tricky lawyer; we could not possibly foresee all the quirks and side-steps that would certainly occur to him, and our apparent doubt of his good faith only served to increase his trickiness. It would have been better if I had held my tongue.

"Enough!" King said finally with a gesture that wiped out the last five minutes at a stroke. "This is between thee and me, Kangra Khan. The undertaking stands thus: Here, by this fire, tomorrow night, thou and Ali Babul are to meet and talk before us. Both to have safe conduct. Nothing that shall be said tomorrow night by this fire shall be held against thee or him, unless we all reach agreement."

"That is the promise," the Hillman answered; and he rose with his right hand on the hilt of his knife to give the oath solemnity.

When he had met the eyes of each of us in turn King shook hands with him, and he turned, and strode out of the camp with more assurance in his gait than I was altogether glad to see. There is nothing finer than the sight of independence with its face against the world; but there are times, and seasons.

"Somehow, before tomorrow night, he means to put one over on us," I said, and Grim nodded assent.

But King and Narayan Singh were both of the opinion that the Hillman would keep the peace strictly until after the next conference, at any rate. They had the right to know best.

There was peace next morning sure enough—kites wheeling lazily, the smoke of breakfast fires rising spirally from the camps to either hand, and a subaltern with two mounted troopers riding an errand, who laughed as he tossed us the news:

"No shootin' last night! First time for a month! We're wonderin' what Allah's cookin'! You fellows notice anythin' worth mentionin'?"

We reported all well, and no shots fired.

"—— presently, I'll bet you!" he said laughing, and rode on.

It was a reasonably safe bet that he offered. Quiet along that border usually presages coming bloodshed. But we had reason to believe there would be at least one more quiet night, and wished we had betted, just to dampen down his cockiness.

THEN, two hours after breakfast, there came a mounted messenger with a white envelope tucked in his turban. He halted as if it were mounted baseball and he sliding for the home plate. But that was merely swagger; he had trotted until he came within a hundred yards of us. King held his hand out, but the fellow jumped to the ground and stood examining us each in turn.

"Ram-mis-den sahib?" he asked, staring at me.

So I took the envelope and broke the

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seal, aware of mixed emotions, for I knew the handwriting—as strong and downright as a man's, but flowing, with large spaces between the words.

"Joan Angela!" I said, not understanding why I was not pleased; for I would rather see her than a sunrise. Intuition sums up the near future in a flash, giving you the total and no details; but so does Joan Angela's correspondence.

Hello there, Jeff! (she had written.) Don't pretend this isn't a surprize. I'm with the Farquharsons, but they're off on leave today, and I've a date for dinner with the Something-or-other Bengal Lancers. Might see you sooner. Having lots of fun. So long. J. A. L.

The "Something-or-other" Bengal Lancers were presumably the outfit camped over on our left hand. The Farquharsons, I think, belong to the Civil Service; but whoever they are, they ought to have been hanged for turning Joan Angela loose on that countryside. I passed the note in turn to King and Grim, and they waited for the explanation.

"One of my countrywomen. Youth, brains, ability, good looks, heaps of money, and a sense of humor," I said, and King looked at me steadily, reading on my face what I dare say was alarm. I did not try to diagnose it.

"She'll be safe enough with the Lancers, but I'm surprized they should ask her to dinner out here. I suppose there's nothing about that in the regulations, but there's such a thing as common-sense," he answered after a long pause.

"She's pretty sure to get them to ask us to dinner too, tonight," I said.

"Well, we can't go. At least, you can, of course, but Grim and I must stay here."

That was true. Narayan Singh had ridden off on his quest of Ali Babul, and even if it had been likely that the Sikh would return before night, it would have been out of the question to leave him there alone to manage the conference.

"Where is she now?" I asked the messenger.

The man did not know. He said he was the son of a *thalukdar**, and had been asked as a favor to carry the message by Farquharson sahib, whom he had met on his way to the railway station. He had not even seen Joan Angela. Did not know who she was, or pretended not to, and dropped a rather strong hint that, as some one on that countryside, he set a good example by minding his own business. He said he had come simply to oblige Farquharson sahib, and would ride back home as soon as his horse was rested.

So I offered to ride part of the way with him, and he agreed. He seemed rather glad to have company. Even in broad daylight that is no safe border for a solitary horseman, whose equipment is worth powder and shot; belated prowlers lie up until the next night affords opportunity to sneak back with their plunder to the hills, and in their eyes it is sin and shame to overlook a chance that Allah sends.

My purpose was to turn Joan Angela back from the border, even at the risk of a quarrel. As King said, she would be quite safe with the Lancers; but neither he, nor I, nor they, nor she, nor any one could guess how long she would remain with them. She acts on the spur of any moment, with assurance that would make an oil-stock salesman green with envy, and the fact that her astounding luck had never yet deserted her was no proof there would be no end to it.

I rode away presently in search of her, turning over in mind a hundred arguments I might use, well aware that she would flout them all and laugh at me. I would have to make a personal appeal to her; I knew that, and I hated it. For friendship she will often do what no argument of safety or convention will induce her to consider; but I dislike dealing on those terms. Friendship is nothing to bargain with, but a thing apart, like a man's religion or his nationality, to be held unaffected by circumstances. Nevertheless, I was willing to sacrifice that friendship, if by doing so I might steer her out of danger.

However, whatever her luck might be, mine was out that morning. I drew the Farquharson's bungalow blank; nobody home, not even a caretaker; not so much as a hanger-on to answer questions. The European quarter there was a straggling line of beastly official bungalows, and I rode to every one of them, without result. Nobody had heard of Joan Angela. I gathered, without being told so, that the Farquharsons had made themselves disliked and had applied for leave in consequence.

But I stuck to it, and the *Thalukdar* stayed by to help. Failing all trace of Joan

*Landholder.

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Angela herself, we begged a change of horses and galloped all the way to Dera Ghazi Khan, where I saw the commandant and warned him. He was indignant, and swore he would twist the Lancers' tails for daring to ask a woman to dinner so close to the border. I overheard his instructions. Joan Angela Leich was to be found and taken to Peshawar, where the authorities might deal with her as they should see fit.

That suited me. It was after four o'clock then, and I calculated I had just about time to reach the Lancers' camp before dark. That was the last card up my sleeve, and a trump of sorts. I meant to tell them what the commandant had said, after which it was fairly safe to wager they would keep Joan Angela at least well-guarded until definite orders came.

So the *Thalukdar's* son and I parted company, and I begged still another change of mounts, for my weight is no joke even for an army remount used to carrying all the paraphernalia a soldier lugs around with him. That last horse was a good one, and I made him prove it, galloping like —— until we reached the Jhelum and then following the bank, with only a short pause to let him breathe, until I could see the lights of the Lancers' camp beginning to blink in the distance in descending dusk.

They were still several miles away, but it was not time yet for the border-thieves to take chances, so I reined in to a walk for the horse's sake, conscious for the first time that I had no weapon but not especially nervous on that account. I was very likely safer at slow speed than if I hurried, since a lurking enemy would judge that if I did not seem afraid there was probably good reason for it. On the whole I was well enough contented, deeming my effort in Joan Angela's behalf well made and her as good as shipped away to safety.

It was pitch dark before I grew aware of voices somewhere on ahead. One voice was a woman's—golden—not raised, and yet not undisturbed. I could not hear what she said, for my horse put his forefoot in a hole and nearly fell as I spurred him forward. I heard a man order her in English to be silent, and then I caught the answer, as distinctly as if it had been given ten yards away instead of possibly a hundred.

"You'll have to ask in a different tone of voice if you expect me to oblige you!"

"Then you die!" some one snarled—in English again.

"All right. My funeral. Nobody else need worry!"

Then I recognized her voice beyond the shadow of a doubt, but did doubt what to do. All I could see was the camp-fires and lanterns blinking in the distance; between them and me were quite immeasurable miles of black night, with the Jhelum River swirling and sucking on my left hand. The horse sensed danger, shied toward the river, and reared as he found himself too close to the rotten bank. Some one fired from fifty yards ahead of me. The horse shuddered and collapsed; a ton or two of earth gave way; earth, horse and I went plump into the river all together.

I ought to have drowned along with the wounded horse, for the Jhelum sweeps in a hurry around a curve at that point, with shallows in mid-stream that send the force of water sluicing against the bank. But there was a boat tied by the nose to a tree-stump and pressed close against the bank by the weight of the river rushing by, and my hand caught that as I struck out blindly.

In about a minute I was up on the bank again, fumbling at the rope that held the boat. But it was tangled, and my wet fingers made hard work of it in the dark; so I found my clasp-knife and opening that with my teeth cut the rope and let the boat go. It was better than nothing at all to cut off the enemy's retreat.

Then I heard Joan Angela's voice again:

"Let go! I'd rather be killed than handled by a brute like you!"

I heard a slap, as if she had struck some one with her open hand, followed by an oath that ripped the very bowels of the night apart. But she did not scream, and there was no answering blow, nor any sound of struggle. Footsteps began approaching, and I crouched behind a clump of high grass.

I had been in that position about twenty seconds when a new sound warned me I was being stalked. The enemy presumably had sent a scout to make sure that the bullet had done its work thoroughly, and I heard the fellow crawl up to the other side of the clump, within two yards of me. I heard, too, the clink of some kind of weapon that he dragged along the ground. I needed a weapon more than anything else on earth that minute.

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The fellow lay still, listening and trying to peer through the dark along the river bank. He held his breath, and let it out silently, but I could smell him and knew he wore a sweaty sheepskin jacket. Then I heard what sounded like a knife-blade striking against stone, and judged he had two weapons, of which the knife in the dark was worst.

There was nothing after that to hesitate about. When you know the worst, and know there is no alternative, the thing to do is to have it over with. I jumped, and landed with both heels on the small of the fellow's back, and maybe it was that that killed him, but I used the butt-end of his rifle to make sure, not being minded to have an enemy at my back as well as several in front.

I could hear them coming fast now, and had no time to reach for the long knife. It was impossible to see, but I was trying to count the foot-falls. Joan Angela's were easily distinguishable, and there seemed to be five or six men hurrying her along. I crouched beside the clump of grass in readiness to do my utmost at close quarters.

However, they stopped again. Maybe they had heard me land on the fellow's back, although he had not cried out.

"Sulíman!" called some one, twenty yards away.

I fired, and hit him, but not fatally, for he shouted to the others. Two or three of them came charging toward me, and I stopped the first one with the butt-end. Another one fired, and missed.

"Joan Angela!" I shouted.

"Who's that? Jeff? Is that you?"

I started for her; but I'm too slow on my feet to pull off any of those tip-and-run stunts. I shouldn't have tried. Before I could reach her I was knocked on the head by a blow from behind; and after that there was darkness and a very bad dream for a long time.

CHAPTER II

"I won't pay!"

I CAME to with a splitting headache, and lay wondering in a kind of twilight, caused, as I discovered presently, by a guttering candle stuck in a knot-hole in a board on a stamped earth floor. Overhead there were beams made of all sorts of odds and ends, including two telegraph poles marked with the British Government's broad arrow, and a length of standard railway metal.

My fingers informed me I was lying on sheepskins or something of the sort; and in among the singing in my ears I could distinguish occasional sounds obviously made by some one rather close to me; but I did not move my head for several minutes, because it hurt too much for one reason, and for another it seemed wise to get some information before betraying any.

It was night; that much was obvious. But I could not guess how many nights I might have lain unconscious, and it felt like eons since that blow from behind had knocked me sprawling. There seemed to be two people in the room, or hut, or whatever it was, and one of them was crooning to herself in a language that if I ever understood I could not then remember. It was decidedly cold, and at last I shivered, whereat I felt agreeably soft fingers feeling the back of my hand.

"Shall I throw another sheepskin over you?" a voice asked.

So I turned my head and saw Joan Angela in riding-breeches on the ground beside me. She looked tired, but not otherwise distressed.

"How did *you* get here?" I asked her stupidly.

"Don't try to talk for a while yet. Listen," she answered. "I was afraid once or twice you were dead; and you're so heavy they had to handle you roughly, although I think they tried to be decent in their own fashion. There's a cut on the back of your head, but I don't think it's deep, and I've bandaged it, so don't move."

"How long have I been here?" I asked.

"Several hours. But don't talk. I'll tell you all about it if you'll listen."

So I lay still, and presently Joan Angela began.

"I was on my way to the Lancers' camp. There were two men with me, and I'd sent a third in advance to say I was coming, and would be late, but was all right. My horse had gone lame, and I was letting him take it easy. But it was later than I thought, and I think we'd lost the way; I'm sure we covered lots of unnecessary miles, and when it grew dark the men seemed to lose their bearings altogether. But I knew if we reached the river and

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turned along the bank we'd be all right, and it was no use turning back, even if I'd cared to; so we rode on. The men were Beluchis, who'd been lent to me by the Farquharsons when they left home—supposed to be awfully faithful and so on, but too stupid for words.

"Well, we reached the river at last, and they said to turn to the right, but I knew better. If we had turned to the right, maybe you and I wouldn't be here now, but I'd have missed the Lancers' camp, and then some other brigands would have bagged me, so what's the odds? I knew I'd taken the right direction.

"It got so dark at last you couldn't see a thing. Then some men jumped out of a hole by the river bank and knifed my Beluchis without a word. I had a pistol and tried to use it, but another rascal cut my horse's throat, and grabbed me as he fell, so the shot went wild. Then he knocked the pistol out of my hand and I was prisoner. But he didn't see where the pistol went to, and I've got it now. They treated me reasonably well, and while they talked I sat down—right *on* the pistol.

"I wasn't worried much. The Beluchis were dead, and of course that was horrible, but I despise a man who's so afraid he has to have a woman show him which way to turn; and they didn't put up any fight, they were just cowards. I was sorrier for the horse. And I knew the Lancers would be out looking for me in two ticks, because they expected me to dinner, and besides, that third Beluchi had ridden on ahead to tell them I was really on the way.

"What puzzled me was that the men who'd captured me—there were nine of them—started to lead me off in the wrong direction. We kept along the river bank. I was even crazy enough for a minute to think they were taking me to the Lancers' camp to hand me over. I could see the camp lights in the distance. There was a man in charge of the party—a chieftain I suppose—whom they all called Kangra Khan; he was the only one who seemed to know a word of English, but when I asked him a question or two he ordered me to hold my tongue. He even threatened to kill me if I made a noise, but I didn't believe him. I kept raising my voice in the hope some of the Lancers' outposts would hear me; and at last I really did hear some one coming. It turned out to be you.

"Kangra Khan put his hand over my mouth then, and I bit it. I wish you'd heard him swear! But he's a gentlemanly sort of savage and didn't hit back. They shot your horse, and they were awfully sore because you killed one of their men, and that was why they knocked you on the head instead of roping you. You nearly killed Kangra Khan, by the way. Your bullet seared his cheek, and would have hit me if I'd been about a foot more to the right.

"Well, you were knocked out; but some one struck a match, and I recognized you. And you weren't dead, because I could feel your heart beating. Then we heard what might be Lancers coming. The party grew scared, and got ready to scatter. They were about to tie my hands, and one man folded up a bit of sheepskin for a gag. I didn't fancy that.

"Of course, it was worse than a hundred to one chance of the Lancers coming on you in the dark; and if they didn't stumble on you you'd be dead before morning. So I promised them I'd come quietly provided they took you too. If not, no. And I started in to yell to prove it!

"Kangra Khan seems something of a sportsman in his own way, and took me at my word. He gave orders to the gang to pick you up and carry you gently. It seems you'd cut their boat loose, and we had to go miles back along the bank until we found another one, and we crossed the river at last in the craziest box of a thing you ever saw. I thought we were sure to be drowned a dozen times. The boat was half full of water, and you lay on the bottom with the water flopping over you, and me holding your head up so you could breath.

"They had turned loose the two horses that belonged to my Beluchis, so the Lancers would follow them and give Kangra Khan a chance to slip by unobserved. He didn't cross the river with the rest of us, but continued along the bank in the direction of the Lancers' camp, saying he'd see me later and that he held me to my promise to go quietly. I told him I'd come to his funeral when the British hanged him, and he grinned as if he thought that a good joke.

"Once we'd crossed the river the going was fairly easy for a long time, but they hurried me and lugged you until I felt nearly as all in as you looked. I had to

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remind 'em a good many times of the chief's orders to treat you gently; and as they didn't know any English, and I can't talk their language, it wasn't so easy. But I remembered I'd heard 'em call him Kangra Khan; so I kept saying, 'Kangra Khan!' and pointing to you, and frowning, and presently they saw the point. I guess they're scared of him, and I don't blame 'em—he looks like a top-dog.

"Then we came to these hills, and the going began to be awful. They had to lug me up precipices by the hands. When daylight comes I daresay it'll all look simple enough, but in the dark it felt like climbing Everest or something. When we reached this hut they shoved me in, and threw in some sheepskins, and you on top of them, and left us. But a little later on they opened the door and pushed in an old woman—at least she *looks* old—that's her you hear crooning. She's scared to death of us.

"Every once in a while she shows me a knife about a yard long. But she brought a candle with her, which is something. I guess it'll be dawn soon. This hut's built of stones and mud and stolen timber, with bits of old sacking and stuff like that in the chinks. Are you cold? Are your clothes nearly dry? Let me feel them."

"Does the old woman know any English?" I asked.

"No. I've tried her. I think that song she's croaking is a prayer, or an exorcism. It's intended to keep us from bewitching her; that's my guess. How does your head feel?"

Nothing obliges a man to recover so swiftly as something particular to think about, and Lord knew I had that in plenty. If I had my choice, for instance, between saving Joan Angela Leich or Rheims Cathedral, the building would go without a moment's hesitation. I managed to turn my head to look at her.

You can't change her much. Her hair was all untidy, and her jacket and shirt-affair were stained with dirt, but she was mighty good to look at, nevertheless. The guttering candle threw half of her face in shadow, but made her brave eyes shine, and the outline of her face was something that is never born outside America, whatever fools may say about the "melting pot." There was no nonsense there, no humbug, no claptrap, but a gallant good humor, and a disregard for things of no account that seems to me better than religion.

She had on a long, dove-colored overcoat, but it was chilly, and I told her to take one of the sheepskins and throw it over her to keep off the draft that came whimpering through the cracks; apparently she hadn't thought of that before. She had to pull the sheepskin out from under me. Then, because the gods who supervise such things were willing, I fell asleep, which in men like me, who am nearly all physique without much brains, is a pretty sure sign of recovery.

WHEN I awoke it was broad daylight, as you could tell by the light streaming in through cracks. Joan Angela was dozing, chin on knees, with her back against a wall, and the old hag was mixing up a mess of goat's milk and some sort of grain—our breakfast presumably. I got up, and found I could stand without holding on to anything, but that was about all; so I copied Joan Angela's example and sat with my back to the wall.

Five minutes after that the door opened and in strode Kangra Khan. He stood leaning on his rifle looking at us, while I blinked at the sunshine. There were men crowding to the door behind him, but he motioned them back angrily and slammed the door in their faces, which did not, however, prevent them from clapping their eyes to the cracks.

After about a minute's silence, during which the old hag stirred away steadily at the porridge, he gave me Allah's blessing. I assured him he needed it more than I did.

"A man," I said, "who commits such treachery as you have done, will need pity rather badly by and by."

"*Inshallah!*" he answered. "I am sorry you were hurt, but you killed two of my men. What wrong had they done you?"

There was no need to answer with words. I glanced at Joan Angela, who was studying him quietly over the top of her knees.

"Is the *sahiba* hurt?" he asked.

"She seems to be a prisoner," I answered.

"And a good one!" he retorted. "What of it? What treachery have I done? Lo, I kept the promise. I was at the fire, and spoke with Ali Babul in the *sahibs'* presence. Moreover, I told the fat pig Ali Babul I will not help the Punjabis. Lo, I spat at him

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to prove it! Lo, I have no need to bargain with the dog!"

He gestured magnificently in Joan Angela's direction.

"They tell me the *sahiba* has a mint of money!"

"So we're held for a ransom?" I asked.

"Aye, a great one!"

I gestured upward with my thumb. There was the roar of two aeroplanes overhead.

"The Lancers will come presently," I assured him.

"Aye! Those fools will prod a hornet's nest! They are across the river now. I sent my man an hour since to warn them to turn back again. They will make him prisoner. When they question him, he will ask whether four hundred can wisely attack us. I have twenty thousand men."

I accepted that statement with reserve. Accuracy as to numbers is unknown in all that Northwest country. Two thousand—twenty thousand—even two hundred thousand—might mean pretty much the same thing. Still, his point was obvious.

"Defeat them, and you deal with the guns behind them. Beat the guns, and comes an army," I answered.

"Comes the army, and who shall guard the prince? Is the Punjab so contented? Do the British want war?" he asked me. "Nay! I tell you, they will rather pay my bill! A *crore** of rupees and *sahiba* goes free—thou with her. Otherwise, the Melikani will send battleships, and land an army, and fight the British from the rear!"

They have peculiar notions about the United States in some parts of the world, and it was no use telling him how slight the prospect was of Congress voting for a war in India. Since the A. E. F. went to France they all believe that anything might happen.

His case looked stronger than I cared to admit to him. It would probably take weeks, and months perhaps, before the British could bring a force to bear sufficient for invasion of that territory. For defense they were fairly well provided, but it is another matter to advance across savage and supplyless hills. Besides, as he said, there was the prince; undoubtedly they did not want a war while he was visiting India. About our only chance was if the British should strike suddenly and surround the place where we were now hidden, which could not be far from the border. But as if he had read my thoughts, Kangra Khan deprived me of that faint hope that minute.

"They hunt on a false scent," he said, grinning. "Today we lie here. Tonight we move on. By tomorrow they may hunt a year and never find you. In a week you will be farther from them than the mountain was from Mohammed, on whom Allah's blessing! Shall they come to you then?"

He could only have one object in telling me his plans. The much more usual method is to keep a prisoner in the dark as to his destiny. He was talking to me, but at Joan Angela, hoping she would offer to pay the demanded ransom. But ignorance of the extent of danger is a great fortifier of courage; and inborn love of adventure is no weak straw to blow away with argument.

"I won't pay!" Joan Angela said simply, looking up and straight into his eyes. I think she was rather enjoying herself.

For a moment a look of cruelty crossed his face. The Hills—the spirit of the Hills—the barren, cruel heart of Allah's "Slag-heap," as they call it, that compels and curses and deprives the weakest, hardening the hardest, reminded him he might compel too. There are ways and means; and there are women who are more expert than men in inventing agony for prisoners—all at his beck and call. But something manly in him seemed to fight that suggestion down. He laughed, showing yellow, irregular teeth.

"I have seen men's hearts fail. Is a woman's resolution greater?" he asked ironically. Then, with bitter meaning: "Eat while you have the chance!"

He motioned to the hag, who brought the bowl of porridge and set it down between Joan Angela and me, together with two old, rusty spoons. The stuff was smoky and nearly cold, nor any too clean, and we preferred our fingers to the spoons. There was grit, too, in the stuff. But I think Joan Angela enjoyed it, partly because almost any food was good after a long fast and a wetting; mainly because of the adventure, and the novelty.

Kangra Khan stood watching us, smiling rather grimly. We might have been two strange animals being fed in a cage. On the whole he seemed rather pleased with us, but I thought I detected a trace of anxiety underlying his cavalierly air, as if

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perhaps all were not so well with him as he pretended. There were the eyes to the cracks, for instance, and the voices of his men outside, suggesting neither discipline nor overconfidence in their leader. Their eagerness to get a glimpse of Joan Angela, and some of the comments I overheard, brought another thought, and it was just as well Joan Angela did not understand the language.

"You know this woman's honor is in your keeping;" I said, looking straight at him. He did not answer; so I added to the hint. "You will be held answerable. If harm should befall her, the British would never rest until they hanged you in a pig-skin. They would burn your carcass afterwards."

He showed his teeth again. No Moslem enjoys that threat.

"Let her beware of herself!" he answered surlily. "By Allah, who am I that you should say such words to me?"

"Let's hope you're a man of discretion," I answered; and at that he turned his back on us and went outside to snarl and argue with his men.

Whereat Joan Angela nudged me and touched her jacket pocket in which the little automatic pistol lay; which was all very well as a last recourse, but none too comforting at that.

Meanwhile, my head ached, and if we were to be moved on somewhere that night it behooved me to get in fit condition for the march, or otherwise I would be unfit to snatch opportunity. It may have been fever; a man's brain after a severe blow is seldom in shape to judge sensibly; but the only line of action that appealed at all to me just then was to escape by some means as we threaded the hills by night, and work our way back to the Jhelum River. I began to talk it over with Joan Angela.

I have been blamed since because I did not advise her there and then to agree to pay the ransom. Then they could have sent a messenger to make the necessary stipulations with the military; bankers, or the Government, would doubtless have advanced the money on Joan Angela's note, and even a third of a million dollars would hardly have inconvenienced her much. But the truth is, it hardly occurred to me.

Courage is more contagious than disease. If she had dallied with the notion, I might have urged it. But the indomitable spirit was so strong in her that there was lots to spare, and some of it conveyed itself to me. It was likely enough she would have despised me if I had ventured to propose surrender—not that I would have let that prevent it, if I had thought it best to yield. But you can't consider yielding—not in Joan Angela's company.

As an abstract proposition failure is incomprehensible to her; and as a concrete fact it never seems to have been part of her experience. Men have called me an idiot for not insisting on her handing over the ransom money; but neither King, nor Grim, nor Narayan Singh found fault with me in that respect; and I know that as I sat there in the hut beside her—admiring her, I admit—the only line of thought I followed was how to escape by subtlety or violence. And I am not a subtle person.

"Let's take turns sleeping," I proposed. "Pocket any kind of food and any weapon that comes within reach. Above all, don't give them any idea that we're thinking of escape."

She went and lay down on the sheepskins that had been my bed, and I kept watch while she dropped off to sleep like a two-year-old. The old woman started her crooning again, as if sleep were productive of evil spirits to be exorcised. But after a while it occurred to me she was trying to work magic to cast a spell over us; so I pretended to doze off too, sitting up, and surprized her in the act of searching Joan Angela's jacket pocket.

That put me in possession of a knife. She flashed the weapon the instant she saw I was awake, and I took it from her, twisting her wrist until she gasped; but she did not scream, and she was at such pains to make no noise that I could not help noticing the circumstance. She seemed much more anxious than I was to avoid being heard by the watchers on guard outside.

What is it that makes a man act, when his own judgment has nothing definite on which to base itself. Intuition? Stored up experience? I don't know. I only do know that I shoved that long knife down my breeches-leg, took the old woman by the scruff of her wrinkled neck, opened the door, which was only fastened with a leather thong, and kicked her out into the midst of an astonished circle of Pathans, who were sitting around a six-stick fire gambling and

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discussing prospects. She landed almost in the fire. Two of them pointed their rifles at me, and the rest kicked her further on her way, she screaming and cursing, they laughing, throwing stones after her as she slid out of sight down a shoulder of rock.

THEN I stood in the doorway, not worried about rifles, since I argued they would hardly shoot a prisoner worth money if they could avoid it; but curious. Four of the men were playing a game with a wooden board and pebbles—a sort of prehistoric form of checkers. I went and sat down between two of them and looked on, remembering to bless them in the name of the Prophet of God, and they returned the blessing civilly enough, although one great hairy ruffian standing on the look-out near by slapped his rifle meaningly. I nodded to him, and he seemed to accept that as a satisfactory promise of good conduct. His principal business seemed to be to watch the British aeroplanes and give warning if they should turn in our direction.

One of the players asked me if I had any money to gamble with, but I was not fool enough to say yes. I always carry money. There were four five-hundred-rupee notes tucked away in a pocket inside my waistband, and I suspected Joan Angela of having more than that in some fairly safe hiding-place; but the sight of money would have acted like blood on wolves. There are better ways than bribery to win the friendship of a savage. Admire a horseman's horse, a musician's music, a politician's politics, and he is your man.

I singled out the strongest-looking of them, and admired his muscle. He began to show off, picking up a piece of wood about the thickness of an ax-haft and breaking it with a jerk. I "saw" that and raised him, breaking one of the pieces, which was more than twice as difficult. It made my head ache, but aroused the excited interest of them.

The fellow came back at me with an offer to try hand-grips, elbows to the ground; so we lay down face to face, each with his right elbow on the rock, and gripped fingers; he chose a tricky grip that gave him an advantage, but I let him have it, and rapped his knuckles on the rock so sharply that he shouted, and they all laughed. He refused to try that a second time, so to put him in good temper I let him beat me at pulling against each other, foot to foot, and after that we were all on excellent terms. He told me his name was Akbar bin Mahommed.

I asked him why he had been so glad to see the old hag kicked out from the hut, but instead of answering the question they all became suddenly interested in their rifles and pretended to hear sounds among the rocks below that called for investigation; so when they had quit that foolishness I began to tell them stories, remembering how Grim was used to managing wild Arabs in that way. They became like children almost instantly, and one man turned his back so that I might rest my head against his while I talked.

I told about magic I had witnessed in Benares, and about imaginary old women who could turn a man into a crow, the crow into an alligator, the alligator into a fish, and the fish into an insect, after which the insect could be trodden on and squashed by the first hoof that happened along—evolution vice versa, as it were. They voted that a splendid story, and began to brag about their own witches. The hag whom I had kicked so cavalierly turned out to be one of them.

Her principal virtue, or demerit—according as a man employed her or became her victim—was that she could see in the dark what a man would do by daylight; and by mixing incantations with his food could prevent his doing this or that thing and oblige him to do something else. That, they said, was why Kangra Khan had sent her into the hut with us; and they added that now no doubt I would have to do as Kangra Khan wished. But they all claimed to have suffered under the old harridan in some way or other. She had made this man's cow abortive, that man's wife barren, and the other's child had died of smallpox. One fellow vowed he had spent nine months in Peshawar jail, all because, for spite, she had given him the wrong magic when he set forth to rob soldiers at the guard-post.

"But she will bewitch your foot for having kicked her!" Akbar bin Mahommed added by way of afterthought. "And that is a pity, for the foot is a good strong man's. Better kill her next time, lest a worse evil befall. By Allah, I myself would kill her if I dared; but my son is only two years old, and at that age men die easily."

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"Is she devoted to Kangra Khan?" I asked him.

"Devoted to the ——! She supports him! None dare refuse to obey him for fear of her."

It seemed likely Kangra Khan would resent my having kicked the hag, if that was the state of local politics. I suggested something of the sort, but they all laughed.

"Nay! He, too, is afraid of her. The next time she refuses him a request, he will bring her back to thee to be kicked and choked! None of us dares wring her neck, but who cares whether she bewitches thee?"

I asked where the British Lancers were, and with considerable glee they pointed out a sort of amphitheatre in the foot-hills about twenty miles away. After a while I made out an extended string of dots, like insects, and they told me those were the Lancers vainly searching in the wrong direction for Joan Angela and me.

"And by Allah, there be some on this side who will get boots and new weapons!" they added. "Kangra Khan has set an ambush."

I asked about Kangra Khan, and they all agreed he was a good strategist, but a domineering fellow who could not brook rivalry or even argument.

"He thinks that when he speaks, his word is Allah's, and the *mullah* must stand aside, praying backwards under his breath! In time of fighting Kangra Khan is best; in peace, the *mullah;* so we play the one against the other; but by the Prophet—on whom blessings!—a man can hardly call his life his own in any event."

An aeroplane began to circle in a long curve in our direction, and we could see the machine-gun ready to search out nooks and crannies; so I was ordered back into the hut, whose roof I noticed then was hidden from above on three sides by an overleaning crag camouflaged by the rock's shadow. It would probably be impossible for a flyer to see the hut at all until late afternoon. I stood in the door and watched the guard take cover as skillfully as if they had had a course in Flanders; then went in and took my turn on the sheepskins, while Joan Angela stood watch.

They brought us meat and stolen rice at noon, with curry in it—pretty evil stuff. I cached a little of the rice in a handkerchief and went to sleep again, we taking turn and turn about until evening, when they brought us more food, this time bread of a sort made in the form of flat cakes like chupatties. I cached quite a lot of that.

Then Kangra Khan came, looking tired and none too well satisfied. He omitted the customary blessing as he filled the doorway and stood glaring in at us with his rifle slung behind his back.

"You have a last chance now to pay the ransom," he said angrily. "The *mullah* has paper and pen. Will you sign a letter for us to send?"

Joan Angela laughed at him, which is not a wise course to take toward a chieftain in those savage hills.

"No," she said, "I've promised to attend your funeral. That's the only promise you'll ever get from me!"

CHAPTER III

"A head is worth a hundred-thousand rifles!"

THE sun went down in an angry glare behind the hills at Kangra Khan's back as he stood in the doorway muttering oaths into his beard. He did not choose to be laughed at by a woman. Nevertheless, he postponed reprisals, and the reason appeared presently.

"See that!" he snarled, tossing an envelope to me.

It was dark inside the hut. I went to the door and walked out past him, holding the letter toward the last red rays of sunshine. It was written in Persian.

To Kangra Khan of the Orakzai [it ran] from Athelstan King. Take notice. This affair is between you and me. You have prisoners, a woman and a man. Their honor and their lives are in your keeping. You and I now have a bone to pick and if need be the jackals shall tell the answer to the night. Settle your own quarrel with the *Raj*. Look to me to hold you answerable for the proper treatment of my friends.

I began to read the message aloud to Joan Angela, but Kangra Khan snatched it from my hand.

"*Mashallah!* Does he think I am a wild beast?" he demanded. "Curse his impudence! Those Lancers have slain a dozen of my men this afternoon, and the fliers have finished off another score. Shall I not play tit-for-tat on you two?"

A well-aimed blow would have cracked his head against the door-post, but there were two many men in the dark behind him

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to make that chance worth taking. Besides, it was decidedly unlikely he would kill such valuable prisoners as he calculated us to be, and he was possibly the only friend we had in sight.

"He invites you to act like a gentleman," I suggested.

"Not he! He threatens me!"

"He says it's between you and him," I retorted. "We're only prisoners. You can't drag us into it."

He seemed to see the force of that. A savage always is at a disadvantage when his sense of fairness is appealed to. It is only the civilized folk who hold ethics subject to convenience. I think what angered him was that King should have doubted his proper intentions.

"Ye shall eat as I eat, sleep as I sleep, march as I march, suffer as I suffer!" he growled. "By Allah, ye shall pay the price I name, or be forever prisoners!"

He strode into the hut as if to seize Joan Angela, but was satisfied when she came backing out in front of him.

"By Allah, who is Lord of all, now hear me! Ye have a hundred days. Pay me the money before the hundred days are up, or I take this woman for a wife and shoot thee, Ramm-is-den. That will be my answer to Attleystan King!"

He tore the letter into little bits in front of us and threw them to the winds, then turned and strode away, tossing an order back over his shoulder to the men who were clustered in a group between us and the edge of the rock on which the hut stood. They signed to us to follow him and closed in before and behind, so that we trod on the heels of the men in front and those behind crowded us.

Escape would have been impossible, and after an hour's hard traveling the chance grew even less, for we followed a track that wound in and out among crags and ravines with seldom more than room for two to go abreast, and often only room for single file. It was impossible to see into the ravines, for the cliffs above us cast a deep-black shadow and only the snarling of Jhelum's tributary streams among the boulders hinted now and then at what might be in store for any one who stumbled.

But Joan Angela was a long way yet from being ill-pleased with her lot. She was getting what she had come away from home for—excitement. Money had taught her that you can't buy anything worth having, except responsibility, and she was tired of expensive civilization—bored to rebellion against it. This was fun, in her eyes; real risk; genuine adventure; thrilling. She began to sing, until a man turned in his tracks and curtly ordered her to be silent.

Joan Angela was going much the stronger of the two of us. A blow on the back of the head leaves effects that are not thrown off too easily. At the end of the second hour I began to feel dizzy and had to sit down for a rest at intervals, to the awful disgust of our escort and the alarm of Joan Angela.

"The big bullock weakens soonest!" they quoted, sneering.

"I'd better offer to pay up, although I hate to," Joan Angela said with a mixture of disappointment and generosity. "I'm not going to let my obstinacy kill you."

It only made it worse of course, to have to argue with her. I did not propose to cost her a million dollars. What was worse still, Kangra Khan looking down from above overheard us, and joined in.

"Ye have but a hundred days to pay!" he reminded us; and though I could not see him I could almost feel him grin. "One month for a letter to go to America. One month for the letter to return. A month for negotiations, and ten days to make the payment in! Be but one day late, and the woman shall know what wifing means in a village of the Orakzai! Attleystan King may come then and make a feud for her; mayhap he will bury such bones of thine as the jackals haven't cracked up, Ramm-is-den!"

"Better pay!" said my friend Akbar bin Mahommed, with a hand on my shoulder. "*Mashallah!* It is shame to see a corpse like thine blistering in a nullah. Write thou the letter, and go free when the money comes. Make a feud with him thereafter, and I will join thee!"

I thought that a mighty handsome offer and it put new heart in me. That was no time or place to write letters. We could do that in the morning, if Joan Angela should then elect to yield. A man who offers friendship to a fellow in a tight place ranks ace high in my esteem, whatever his friendship may be actually worth. I struggled on again; and after a while we came to a circular cup in the hills, where a group of

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stone huts surrounded a corral, in which were three lean horses.

There was argument. There always is in that land when anything whatever is to be done or left undone; but at the end of half an hour's explosive blasphemy, in which the name of Allah mingled with pollution and the angels were summoned to witness the mess, two of the horses were finally "borrowed under duress" for Joan Angela and me, and the poor old skate that fell to my lot started on the worst, and last adventure of his life.

I overheard Kangra Khan saying he took the horses, not on my account, but because their owners would want them back and consequently would be wary of offending him by giving information to any British troops who might chance on our line of retreat. That sounded plausible, but it may have been only his method of keeping up a reputation with his own men for iron-hearted craftiness. It served, at any rate to inform me on two points. I bullied my sorry beast until I was knee to knee with Joan Angela.

"Our host is afraid of pursuit, and is not too popular hereabouts," I told her. "Pathans are poor hands at sticking together. If there's a dispute among themselves, our chance to escape improves."

She nodded.

"I won't pay as long as your head holds out!" she answered. "But you and I are friends, Jeff, and you know me well enough to cry quit the minute you feel like it. If it weren't for your injury I'd call it good fun."

Well, opinions differ as to what is fun. Now, looking back at it, I can see her point of view; but just then there was nothing except dislike for squealing—to apply no stronger term—that kept me from counseling surrender. I made up my mind to let things take their course, hoping some obvious means of escape would present itself.

Joan Angela can endure as much as any man alive in the way of roughing it, and about the only man who doesn't find her splendid company is the kind who can't or won't forget the sex problem. To her mind sex is no problem, and if I had played the part of a heavy male protecting her against a world too dangerous for her, she would have held it against me all my days. I would have lost a friend I value.

We rode interminably up and down a winding track that would have suited goats, dismounting and walking often because the horses were too weak to negotiate stiff places with our weight on them—mine especially. Once or twice, as if to prove the dissension among the Pathans that I suspected, there were shots fired near at hand; but whether at us or in pursuance of some regulation feud it was impossible to guess. We were making a prodigious noise, stumbling over the rocks and kicking loose stones that went echoing down into the gorges. Sound travels in those hills as if through speaking-galleries, and a wakeful enemy might have heard us coming from miles away.

The strange part was that, although we saw the flash of a rifle frequently, and our men usually fired at the spot where the flash was seen, not a bullet sang near us. It was like a sham fight, staged for the motion pictures, and Kangra Khan led on, and on, as if there were no fight at all.

Then the moon rose, wan and silvery, veiled like a bride in a wreath of mist; and we came to a cliff shaped like Gibraltar. At the angle facing us the track divided, turning to right and left. Kangra Khan took the left hand, and we filed after him. Close behind me walked Akbar bin Mahommed, and there were two more men guarding our rear about fifty or a hundred yards behind—both busy at the moment with an enemy who yelled insults and fired wildly from between rocks practically out of range.

The wan moonlight shone on that Gibraltar-shaped cliff, and it was impossible to pass it without being seen. There was a distance of possibly two hundred yards along which the track that Kangra Khan had chosen wound like a glistening snake before it dipped into gloom again. It looked like sheer, stark suicide to follow that course under fire; the track was narrow; there were no caves, nor many boulders; a man's shape would be silhouetted against gleaming cliff; an owl swooped by, and bird and shadow were as clear as if they had been etched. The only element of safety was the deep, dark ravine on the left hand, which was so wide that an enemy under cover on the far side would have to sight carefully; but even so, the range was not more than three or four hundred yards.

However, Kangra Khan hurried forward,

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perhaps in haste to get the danger done with, and his men hurried at his heels at two or three-yard intervals. Akbar bin Mahommed, close behind me, made no comment; and the firing in the rear ceased suddenly. Silence fell, as if the air had suddenly refused to carry any sound except the snarling of a waterfall a mile away.

"Wait a minute!" I said; and Joan Angela drew rein.

We watched Kangra Khan and his men step forward into the pale light.

"Allah! What now?" asked Akbar bin Mahommed.

SUDDENLY a hurricane of rifle-firing split the silence, and for about a minute the ledge on the far side of the ravine was lit with spurting flame. There must have been fifty men pot-shotting out of ambush, and at one spot enough powder flashed to suggest a machine-gun. Bullets splashed against the glistening cliff, and whole sections of shale shuddered and slid downward. Yet Kangra Khan continued on his way, and not even his men seemed in any special hurry.

"You see for yourself!" I said, turning to Akbar.

"Ho!" he answered. "That is nothing! Those are the Jebel Waziris. They came to loot across the border, but they quarreled with us. Now they think to leave a feud or two behind them on their way home. But, by Allah, none can shoot straight against that cliff in this light—as the British learned a year ago. By day a boy could hold the path against a hundred men. By night—ride on and see!"

"By Allah, no!" I answered; and I seized Joan Angela's rein to make sure no spirit of daring should take hold of her and send her galloping across the line of fire.

"I'm not afraid of anything those savages dare face!" she said, laughing at me; and Akbar bin Mahommed was in the act of seizing my rein to drag the horse forward, when it suddenly occurred to me that our chance had come. There were only two men to our rear. If we could make those plugs of ours gallop, we had a reasonably good chance to escape.

I thought of the knife, but there was not time to pull that out from its hiding-place. Besides, even in that crisis I doubt whether I would have used the blade of it on Akbar; he and I had grown too friendly—though I don't doubt he would have shot me. I swung my fist back for a blow that should have stunned him—and the horse shied.

Something—brown-black—heavy—slid in an avalanche of loose shale and fell from the ledge above us plump on to Akbar's shoulders. His rifle went spinning into the ravine. A hand went to his mouth, and he lay helpless, heaving in spasms underneath a dark-robed thing that might have been a colossal vampire-bat. In the shadow at our feet the outspread sleeves of the garment looked like wings. But the bat's head turned, and Grim's pale face glanced up at me!

"Take the right-hand track!" he snapped. "Hurry!"

But I could hear the rear-guard coming. I jumped off the horse and waited for them, trying to draw the knife while I crouched in the shadow of a projecting spur of the rock-wall. But they came too fast, and I failed to get my belt undone in time. So I punched the first man in the nose, and he went over backward, rifle and all, into the ravine, crying out to Allah as he fell. The other fellow fired at me point-blank and singed the bandage on my head. I wrenched the rifle away and swung the butt-end upward, catching him below the jaw, and he followed his friend, making no outcry whatever. I heard the two of them fall—*thump—thump*—on the rocks below. I had broken the rifle, so I threw it after them.

Now the rear was open for retreat, I didn't doubt for a second Grim would change his plans. Hurrying back, I found Joan Angela helping him to lash Akbar bin Mahommed's hands with the reins belonging to my sorry screw. Neither of them recognized Grim, and even to me he seemed like an apparition in a dream. Not a word was said until Akbar's hands were tied. Then Grim said—

"Mount!" and we obeyed him.

I reached for my brute's nose to pull him round and start back along the way we had come; but Grim slapped his rump and kicked him forward, and in a second we were trotting straight for the great Gibraltar rock, Joan Angela leading. Grim had Akbar bin Mahommed by the neck, and made him run beside us.

There was one great pool of light to cross before we could plunge into darkness on the right-hand side. Just before we reached it

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Grim vaulted up behind me, and the miserable horse nearly collapsed under our joint weight. Joan Angela jockeyed her plug into a gallop, shot through the zone of brightness, and was swallowed in the gloom. We followed at an amble, which was our poor beast's last, broken-hearted effort. Midway through the zone of light a bullet, I don't know from what direction, struck him behind the girth, and he pitched to the ground, throwing Grim and me into a heap in front of him. Grim pulled a pistol out and finished that business. Then we ran, each with a hand on Akbar, and found Joan Angela dismounted, waiting for us in the darkness just around the bend.

My head was swimming, but I supposed we must hurry on. However, Grim said no.

"Sit down and take a cinch on things," he suggested, fingering my bandage. "Is your head bad?"

"Who are you?" Joan Angela asked, not recognizing him. "Jim Grim? Fate seems to drag you into everything! Thanks awfully for coming!" She began to talk of Egypt, where they met the last time.

"Where's King?" I asked, as soon as I could pull myself a bit together.

"Lord knows! He and I took the trail the minute the Lancers said Miss Leich was missing. They had opinions of their own, of course, but King suspected Kangra Khan instantly. It was probable you'd have to lie up all day, and that gave us time to overtake you if we used our wits; and King knew of a bunch of Jebel Waziris, whom he once befriended in some border row. So he and Narayan Singh took one side of the ravine to get their help if possible, and I came this way picking up your trail.

"I'm supposed to be Ali Ibraim, a very holy person from Arabia. They tell things to a holy man, you know, and don't molest him—much. I carry a tooth of the Prophet with me—found it in a dead man's skull this side of the Jhelum. Those were the Jebel Waziris on the far side of the ravine. I was afraid they'd shoot us all, but Allah was on our side that time."

"How on earth did you manage to keep in touch?" Joan Angela asked him.

"It looked impossible. But Narayan Singh sent a woman to me to have herself blessed for child-birth. I gave her a written amulet, which wouldn't be any good until she'd found him again and had him write the name of Mohammed and several angels on the back of it. After that she'd have twins. So I guess he got my message. But, by Gorry, if I don't sleep and eat soon I'll be no good!"

I gave him the rice and chupatties I had cached in my handkerchief—a most disgusting mess it was.

"Have you two eaten recently?" he asked, and then, when we told him yes, devoured the lot as if he liked it.

"This is the best fun ever!" said Joan Angela—truthfully—fervently.

She wouldn't have changed places with a woman in the world just then! Grim met her eyes, and glanced at me.

"We're not through yet!" he assured her curtly.

As he spoke there came the stuttering din of rifle-firing from around the cliff behind us—angry, spasmodic stuff—and yells of imprecation.

"That'll be Kangra Khan trying to fight his way back," said Grim. "He hasn't a chance. But the trouble is, our Waziri friends have made themselves unpopular. They're being hounded. Two outfits of Pathans are on their heels to scupper them before they can reach home; so all we've got is two hundred men in a hurry to reach the skyline with every man's hand against 'em! Retreat to the border is cut off absolutely. Kangra Khan has bragged about Miss Leich and her millions; he was using that yesterday as a talking point to rally armed men to his standard. All he accomplished was to arouse cupidity, and now they're all on the watch for her between here and the border. She's a prize worth bagging!"

"Won't the British troops come for us?" Joan Angela asked.

"Let's hope not!" he answered. "The tribes would stop quarreling among themselves and make common cause. Even our friends the Waziris would be forgiven *pro tem.* The best thing the British can do is to withdraw across the border and pretend they don't care a hoot. Time's the main thing. Every day that passes without cash in sight will tend to decrease your market price. Meanwhile, the more they quarrel among themselves for your possession, the better our chance. Gee whiz! They're hitting her up!"

It began to be clear now why Kangra Khan had led his handful of men so boldly

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along that moonlit track. He had reenforcements waiting for him somewhere along there, and now he was leading them back to find his prisoners, suspecting probably that the Waziris had seized us. He seemed to have enough men with him to force the issue, judging by the din; but the light was against him, and the yells from the far side of the ravine were triumphant, not discouraged.

"If King's with the Waziris, you can bet on them safely," Grim said, listening intently. "Lord! Let's hope the noise don't bring marauders our way! We haven't a friend to windward! The Waziris are our one reliance—and a shifty lot at that!"

Joan Angela showed him her pistol, but he shook his head.

"Keep that for the last contingency," he advised. "Are you fit? Can you march? Is your nerve all right? Then never show your pistol to a soul until you have to use it on yourself! Getting killed don't hurt. The most the best of us can ask for is to die clean. Hide that thing away."

But he drew his own pistol, and stood leaning against the horse, with an outcrop of the cliff on his right hand, so that he could watch the track either way and have the best of any sudden turn of affairs. I noticed he had two more pistols in a belt under his dark cloak, and when I proposed he should lend me one of them he passed it butt-first. About a second after that we came within an ace of accident.

To our right, in a momentary lull between the bursts of rifle-fire, we heard the sound of hurrying feet and clinking weapons. I stood up and leaned over the horse beside Grim, and we raised our pistols to fire point-blank along the track. It was impossible to see anything; the bulge of the cliff cut off the zone of moonlight; one and the same thought urged both of us, to stagger the attacking force by a sudden burst of unexpected pistol-shots, and then make a bolt for it. Joan Angela guessed our intention and stood by to jump on the horse.

But the hurrying ceased, and the thirty or forty pairs of feet we had heard reduced themselves to three or four, who advanced at a walk more cautiously. So much the better for our plan! I calculated the probable level of a man's heart and managed to pull that long knife out as well, for a furious set-to before we beat retreat. We heard a great gruff voice giving orders in Pishtu:

"Careful now! Dark and the mother of death are one! Halt! I go forward alone!"

SOMETHING blacker than the blackness loomed around the serrated outcrop. I fired. Grim knocked my pistol up in the very nick of time.

"God save you, *sahib*, that is the only turban I have!" said a voice I recognized, and Narayan Singh stepped up to us, showing his teeth in a great white grin in the midst of his black beard.

He pulled the turban off and rubbed his head where the bullet had grazed the scalp.

"I have thirty men behind me," he went on, beginning to rebind the turban as casually as if he were in camp. "But it is difficult, for these Waziris are not in love with Sikhs, who have slain too many of their comrades in the border fights. King sahib bade me bring these ruffians to hold this track, lest Kangra Khan should fight his way around the corner yonder in spite of everything. They are picked men, but who shall pick diamonds from a dung-hill?" he asked, giving the turban a final twist, and adjusting the whole at last as a woman gives the final touches to her hat.

"Is the *sahiba* well?"

We introduced him to Joan Angela, who shook hands. She had met him before in Egypt,* and was as pleased as he was to renew the acquaintance.

"Thou and I are birds who love the storm, *sahiba!*" he said gallantly. "Better to die well than to live ill. This would look like opportunity; yet the Gods know best. These *sahibs* know I speak the truth when I say I am your servant."

I did not catch her answer. Some one shouted for Narayan Singh, and we all went hurrying back along the track to the corner, where we piled up such loose rocks as we could find and, in the lime-light as it were, held that point of disadvantage against Kangra Khan's men while King worked his Waziris down into the ravine below.

Every man of ours had a rifle stolen from the British, and they squandered ammunition as men always do waste stolen goods; but even so, we failed in our object. Kangra Khan detected King's purpose to join us; the Waziris made too much noise negotiating the watercourse; to judge by

*"Khufu's Real Tomb."

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their yelling some of them reached our side, but when it came to climbing the steep slope they were met by a sweeping fire from several hundred rifles. Kangra Khan told off a couple of dozen men to keep us busy and poured the rest of his nickeled lead into the ravine.

Once I heard a long, shrill whistle—King's in all likelihood, and after that there was more or less silence below while the Waziris beat retreat under a galling fire up the slope they had so easily descended. Only one man reached us—a fellow with a bullet through his arm, immensely angry.

By dint of threatening to tie her hand and foot I had persuaded Joan Angela to keep out of sight behind the corner. The newcomer crawled behind our barricade of stones until he reached her hiding place, and then got to his feet. I followed him to make sure of his intentions, but he only looked at her; he did not seem to regard her as anything more than a curiosity. Before he spoke to me he tore a strip of calico from his filthy shirt, and, with one end of the strip in his teeth, proceeded to bind his arm. Joan Angela instantly offered to do it for him, but he grinned savagely and turned his face to me.

"Allah's wonders! We are all dead men below there!" he said, jerking his right thumb across his shoulder. "Why not sell this woman to the Pathans if they desire her so much? My people wish to go home."

"How many did you lose down there in the ravine?" I asked him.

"A thousand," he answered. He presumably meant ten. "Where is Jimgrim? I was to speak with Jimgrim. Who art thou?"

I told him I was Jimgrim, doubting whether it was safe to strip off Grim's disguise as a holy man from Arabia.

"Well met!" he answered. "But thou art a liar none the less! I am King sahib's friend, and he told me Jimgrim is the Hajji Ali Ibraim, whom men call Jimgrim because he is beautiful and loved of many women."

It is no insult to be called a liar in those raw hills—rather a compliment. They envy those who have enough imagination to invent an untruth on the spur of an occasion.

"What is the message?" I asked him. "I am Jimgrim's friend."

"King sahib says, 'She should die, and if a youth should step into her shoes, and he a holy man, it might be well.' But he said: 'Jimgrim is the man who will attend to it.' None the less, if Jimgrim fights among the rocks there, thou and I might throw her over the cliff and save him trouble. Have you the holy youth ready to take her place?"

"Let Jimgrim do his own work," I answered, stepping between Joan Angela and him. "What is the rest of the message?"

"Where is that Sikh? Is he here?"

We peered around the corner, and I pointed out Narayan Singh crouching behind a boulder, firing into black night.

"By Allah's teeth, I have a bone to pick with that Sikh! The dog called me a ——"

"Pick it with me then," I answered. "Give me the rest of the message first."

I laid a hand on him, for he was minded to go after Narayan Singh that minute. He tried to break away, but I jerked him round again to face me.

"Kill him!" said a voice beside me. "It was he who set fire to the cloth-stalls in Peshawar half-a-year since!" And Akbar bin Mahommed, with his hands still lashed behind him, thrust his face between us. "Yussuf, thou dog, I would kill thee myself if I were not tied!"

"Trussed like a pig!" answered Yussuf, and spat into Akbar's face.

For answer Akbar ducked his head and butted the Waziri like a ram, hitting him in the belly and sending him reeling backward into the line of fire, where a bullet drilled him through the head from ear to ear and he lay grinning in the moonlight, twitching his fingers, with his brains oozing out on the rock.

So we never received the latter part of King's message, and had no means of guessing what his plan might be. I dragged a fellow out of the line of fire, and sent him to try to cross the ravine and bring an answer back; but he never returned, and whether he was shot or simply ran away I don't know.

When I had sent that messenger I shouted for Grim, but though he heard me it was several minutes before he came crawling behind the improvised barricade. Heavy firing had resumed from the far side of the ravine, but there was still a chance that Kangra Khan's men might try to rush the corner and Grim saw fit to give that danger his first attention. He was moving from man to man, encouraging each in turn. I

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saw him pull out the "Prophet's Tooth" and show it to several of them. Then their war-cry went up—"*Allaho Akbar!*"—and there ceased to be much risk of flinching.

Meanwhile Akbar bin Mahommed thrust his face up close to mine and stared into my eyes as if he could see through them to the thought behind.

"Let my hands go, Ramm-is-den!" he urged. "I swear friendship! By Allah and the Prohpet and the honor of my father; by my father's beard and mine, and by the Holy Tomb, I swear I am thy friend! Untie my hands. By Allah's breath I will be thy brother until I die!"

He turned to Joan Angela, and looked into her eyes as he had into mine.

"*Sahiba*, thou art this man's wife! Bid him loose me! I will be thy man and his until Azrael summons all of us!"

She did not understand a word of Pushtu, but his appeal was obvious enough. He shook the hands behind him that were lashed with the leather thong so tightly and the wrists were swelling, and turned half-toward her so that she might loose the knots if I refused.

"Do you know these hills?" I asked him.

"By Allah, there is not a cranny I do not know!"

"How far to the nearest village?"

"There are four villages that I could reach before the moon sets."

"Have you friends among them?"

"Nay! Who loves *me* hereabouts?"

He doubtless read the disappointment on my face, for his eyes were close to mine again.

"But there are those who fear me!" he added. "There is a woman who must do my bidding lest I laugh in her husband's face, and she die of his knife! Listen, Ramm-is-den! *Inshallah*, I may help thee, for I heard what that dog of a Waziri said. If she is to die—" he glanced at Joan Angela—"and a youth shall take her place—by Allah, am I wrong, or does it mean that she shall not die, and that only the clothes are needed, so that she may pass for a hairless boy? Then I am the man to manage it! Loose my hands and give me a weapon! Give me that knife!

"I know a young Afridi hereabouts who has been to Bokhara and picked up foreign manners there, along with a way of wearing clothes that would shame a Hindu. He teaches some new kind of politics to the younglings, because the elders will not listen to him, and goes unharmed because they say he is mad. I will strip him naked, and she may wear his foppery. Loose me! Let me make haste!"

"Can you bring him here alive?" I asked.

He hesitated, looking straight into my eyes.

"Let that be the test of thy good faith," I said. "Wherever we go, follow, and bring that youth alive to us."

"Good. I will do it. Ye will not go far among these hills," he answered with a note of irony.

Then Grim came, and I gave him King's message.

"Shall I let this fellow go?" I asked, explaining why.

Grim nodded, and I cut the thong, then gave Akbar the knife. He held it out for Grim and me to touch the hilt, hesitated in front of Joan Angela, and after a moment held it out for her to touch too—a prodigious concession, for it is not thought manly to show a woman too much courtesy in that land. Then he was gone, running like the wind up the track away from us.

The rifle-firing was as furious as ever. Now and again there would come half a dozen fairly steady volleys from the far side of the ravine, as if King was trying to instil some system into the Waziris. Then there would be a riot of independent shots, followed by silence, and volleys again at intervals. Kangra Khan's men were wasting ammunition as if it were the easiest stuff to come by in the world, instead of having to be stolen from the British or bought for its weight in coined silver.

"We're beaten," said Grim, "and I don't know what to do." It was the first time in all my knowledge of him that he had ever admitted that. "King can't get to us, nor we to him. The tribes will have heard this shindy, and when morning comes they'll surround us all. Then good-by!"

But Joan Angela, who should have been the most discouraged, laughed.

"Why will the tribesmen wait until the morning?" she asked, with a woman's flair for questions.

"They dread the dark. Unless they're caught out, they stay in and stir late," Grim answered.

"Then we've hours ahead of us. Anything might happen. Let's try our luck. Mine's always good."

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Grim was racking his brains, and it was no use my proposing anything. I knew the language well enough, but did not know the hills; nor did he know them nearly as well as King, who was out of reach. Whatever we might elect to do, there would be no means of getting word of it across that ravine in time to give King a chance to follow up.

"If we wait until dawn we can signal," Grim said, scratching his chin. "King and I know the Morse code."

"How many men are hurt?" I asked him.

"Several—eight or nine. I know of four dead. We can't leave the wounded here."

"I'll bet you King does something clever!" said Joan Angela. "He has the most men. He'll realize it's up to him."

"If he don't, we're all done for," Grim answered gloomily.

But it did not sound as if King were being clever. His Waziris, yelling imprecations, started suddenly to squander ammunition more furiously than ever. The edge of the ravine along the far side became a line of spurting flame. He seemed to have persuaded his men to space themselves along a wider front, and perhaps a scout or a false alarm had put them in fear of a rush by Kangra Khan's contingent.

Shot answered shot across the impenetrable darkness, and I wondered how long the cartridges would last, when suddenly Narayan Singh leaped up and shouted:

"Ahah! See them! Ahah! King sahib, thou art a king, a king, a great one! Ho! A head is worth a hundred thousand rifles! Jimgrim sahib! Rammy sahib! Come and see!"

CHAPTER IV

"I'm sorry I'm a woman!"

THE moon had shifted to the westward far enough to uncover Kangra Khan's position, and because of the shape of the Gibraltar-rock all the advantage of light was coming our way—and King's. Outline by outline, Kangra Khan's predicament disclosed itself. Suddenly the moonbeams touched with silver a long ledge, higher than the Pathan's position, and I could see King—knew it must be he.

No man on earth stands exactly as he does when he is himself, not playing parts. His unselfconsciousness seems absolute then. He grows so utterly absorbed in what he sees and hears that neither danger nor convenience exist for him. He stood like a statue beyond the ravine, on a crag that overhung that moonlit ledge, directing his Waziris, half of whom had crawled to the new position and were pouring a galling fire down into the *sangar** Kangra Khan was holding.

There was still the ravine in the way, but at that point it curved in Kangra Khan's direction and grew considerably narrower, so that the utmost range was not more than two hundred yards. Kangra Khan's men were forced to crouch close to their stone wall, which put them almost out of action, although there was room for about twenty of them in a square, stone tower at one corner, from which they were answering the Waziris' fire. The others, under the wall, had to content themselves with yelling, and by the noise they made I judged there were several hundred of them; but numbers don't mean much—except to increase the problem—when the tide of fortune turns.

About a third of King's Waziris had remained in the old position covering the moonlit track that led from us to the *sangar*. They had practically ceased fire. Only an occasional warning shot served notice that the way was barred, and notified us that it was a "one-way street." A one-eyed charwoman could have recognized our opportunity.

Grim pulled out his Prophet's Tooth and acted like a regimental chaplain showing Irish troops a crucifix. We had about twenty men still fit for action, and they began their chant—*"Allaho Akbar—Allaho Akbar,"* gaining and gaining in speed and noise until it sounded like the tumult of a hundred, and the echo went grinding and clamoring away into the hills, cannoned back and forth from crag to crag. We may have sounded like a thousand to the Pathans up there in the *sangar*, already desperate under the slanting hail of Waziri bullets.

I shouted to Joan Angela to stay where she was, and rushed forward to get in the front rank with Grim and Narayan Singh. (There was no room for more than three or four abreast at any point along the track.) In a second I was passed by half a dozen of our Waziris, so I practically led the rearguard, stumbling over lumps of shale that had been shot down from the cliff-wall on our right hand.

I believe we would have made the *sangar*

*A stone-walled enclosure.

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wall unnoticed by Kangra Khan's men, in spite of the yelling and the noise of the loose shale underfoot; for they, too, were yelling, and the echoes were so confusing that our particular din might have been coming from anywhere. But King's Waziris saw us, and opened a supporting fire too soon, so that we rushed with a screaming stream of bullets overhead, and the pat-pat-patter of their hail on the *sangar* wall preceded us.

One huge Pathan leaped up on the wall waving a tulwar, and crumpled up backward under a hail of bullets. Another took his place, and was run through the belly by Narayan Singh's long saber. Half a dozen more leapt over the wall, engaging Grim, Narayan Singh and several of our men long before I could come on the scene, for it was a straggling rush we made, not timed to meet the exigencies of the slowest. Then we of the rear-guard came up breathless, and a man beside me lent me the use of his knee to leap the wall.

So I was first over, yelling I don't doubt like three men, for that enthusiasm is contagious. Only Grim was silent. Narayan Singh roared for a dozen. He and Grim were over close behind me. I stumbled over a dead Pathan and seized his tulwar. In a second we were backed against the stone wall in the shadow fighting for dear life, with fifty of Kangra Khan's contingent at our throats, and our own men scrambling over one by one to drop down and hack and thrust before their feet touched ground.

That was a first-class fight! One of our men was drilled clean through the head by a Waziri bullet from over the ravine as he crossed the wall, for King's men did not cease fire soon enough. But I think nineteen got over unscathed, and the odds against them, and the utter hopelessness of quarter, made them fight like devils on the slag. To our left front King never ceased his hail of fire against the tower and the wall on that side, so we would have been mowed down if we had left our cover; and many of Kangra Khan's Pathans who tried to get at us by taking a short cut across the midst of the enclosure fell before they came halfway.

It was knife-work—butt and blade and pistol. The Pathan falls back on his natural weapon and tactics in a tight place, and none of us had time to load, or even to aim, for they came at us in the shadow of the wall in a series of spurts and rushes, and when a man was down that was not by any means the end of him. A Pathan with hardly life left in him would crawl in close and try to thrust his knife home before Allah beckoned him.

We lost nine of our nineteen, all dead, for there was no chance for a wounded man except to fight on—no quarter—no appeal for it. I broke the tulwar on a rifle-barrel thrust up by a Pathan to guard his head, and the broken half of the blade went halfway through his skull between the eyes. Then I emptied the pistol, and after that I ducked, to avoid a blow, and grabbed a dead man's rifle, using butt and thrust like an old-time quarterstaff.

Once, and then again, I was saved by a pistol-shot that flashed up from under my arm when three Pathans attacked at once. I had the outside berth, on the edge of the line of moonlight, where the hail of King's Waziri bullets swept within a yard of me, and there were men who went down under my clubbed butt who were nearly shot to pieces as they lay; so I was easier for the Pathans to see than any other of our party, and well for me that single-stick and gloves have always been my favorite pastime! Fifty times in half as many minutes I was dead, but for the training of hand and eye those sports had given me.

And more than a dozen times, from under my legs or arms, or over my shoulder, something—some one—that I had no time to turn and see created a diversion. It was swift, wild, savage work, brute instinct up, with Karma signifying who were to be slain, and who the survivors. Luck, some fellows call it. Law, say I. Neither my time, nor Grim's, nor Narayan Singh's had come. No flinching yet on either side. Nothing but a shambles in the dark. And King's move next.

The firing over our heads ceased, and a yell as from the emptying graves on Judgment Day came up from the ravine, announcing that a third of King's Waziris were making a second attempt to cross. And this time they came like the wind, for the remainder kept up such a withering hail of fire from the new position on the ledge that none could man the walls to make the ravine impassable—and besides, there were we who had to be dealt with before any man dared turn his back on us. Once, from the stone tower, Kangra Khan

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in desperation turned his fire in our direction; but his riflemen, already wild and wavering, could not see us in the shadow. They mowed down half a dozen of their own side, and then had to turn again to rake the flanks of the ravine.

And suddenly the show was over, with *the swiftness* of a hail-storm. How the word spread among the ranks of the defenders I don't know. There was a last savage rush in our direction—a last mêlée breast to breast, with long knives thrusting upward from behind between the legs of those in front and the curses hot in your face as a man's life winged to its account—then almost silence!

They melted. They flitted away like ghosts. They vanished over the rear wall of the *sangar* like a string of shadows cast by magic-lantern rays, leaving nothing but a lot of dead men and some broken, empty cartridge-boxes. One wounded man sat up in the midst of the open space, laughed like a ghoul, fired at me point-blank, missed by an inch, and fell backward stone-dead. That was the last shot fired in that engagement.

I TURNED to see who stood behind me, and looked straight into Joan Angela's gray eyes! She held an empty pistol in one hand, and in the other a long tulwar that had blood on the end of the blade.

"You fight like a man, Jeff!" she said with a little nervous laugh. "I'm sorry I'm a woman. I was only useful once or twice."

Her overcoat was torn, and stained with blood where she had knelt to guard my legs. Her lips were parted, and her eyes wild with excitement. She did not seem afraid, but the hand that held the tulwar was shaking—with excitement I suppose.

"Are you hurt at all?" I asked her.

"No," she answered. "How's your head?"

I had forgotten my head. It was bleeding. The cut had opened, and the bandage was a sticky mess. I think it was that, and the exertion, that saved me from a protracted spell of illness, for my brain was clear again and there was no more numbness. Joan Angela took a dead man's turban and began to look for a clean piece to make a new bandage. I was pulling off the old one, turning at the same time to see where Grim and Narayan Singh might be, when the next thing happened.

Our men were all leaning over the wall to watch King's Waziris come climbing out of the ravine, yelling jokes at them and boasting. I had dropped my clubbed rifle to attend to the bandage. Suddenly two of Kangra Khan's Pathans rushed out from a shadow, and one of them aimed a blow at me with a tulwar that made my skin tingle as I ducked. The other seized Joan Angela around the waist.

I yelled for help, and closed with my man, crushing the breath out of him before he could swing the tulwar a second time. I got his wrist and twisted it until he let the weapon fall, and that took only seconds, but it gave the other fellow time enough. He carried Joan Angela away into the shadow, seizing her from behind with great hairy arms like an orang-outang's. She could not scream, but she kicked and nearly tripped him, and he had his hands full.

I shouted, and some of our men and Narayan Singh came running. I hurled my prisoner into the midst of them backwards and don't know what happened to him. When I saw him again he was dead. I heard Joan Angela gasp in the darkness somewhere. There was a struggle, for the man gasped too, and swore. We rushed for the sound, and cornered the two of them between two inside buttresses, and the Pathan realized the game was up, for he spoke. You could not see anything—not even his eyes.

"By the blood of my father, I will choke her if you move another step!" he snarled.

So he had no weapon. That was something. Pathans don't strangle people if they have a knife available. Joan Angela did not speak; he had his hand over her mouth; but I could hear her heels cracking against his shins. Then she gurgled, and I knew he was choking her. Narayan Singh and I rushed in simultaneously.

The Pathan took to his heels, and we missed him in the dark, cannoning into each other. We had to stop and listen. Then we heard him dragging her body along the stones, and he had reached the corner of the wall before we overhauled him. Then he had to step into the moonlight, and we saw he had her by the coat-collar. She seemed either dead or unconscious, and he had the nerve to try to vault the wall and hoist her over before we reached him.

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Narayan Singh jumped for him and I grabbed the girl; but he kicked Narayan Singh in the jaw and slipped down out of sight over the wall, taking the overcoat with him, minus one sleeve.

Joan Angela's tongue was out between her teeth, and it took several minutes' hard rubbing before the muscles of her throat and neck began to function properly and she opened her eyes. By that time King's Waziris were swarming over the wall, so I picked her up and carried her toward the tower, to stow her in the upper-chamber, out of harm's way. Those Waziris were allies rather by accident than design, and there was no guessing yet what their attitude might be toward a valuable prisoner. We were at their mercy absolutely. They might see fit to compensate themselves for their heavy losses in the night's engagement, and if they in their predicament should assert their own right now to hold Joan Angela to ransom, no other argument than force was likely to have much weight.

So I carried her up the irregular steps that formed an outside support to the tower on two sides, and into the draughty square chamber, pierced for rifle-fire. There was no roof—only burned beams where a roof had once been, and most of the stones that had formed the roof were still littered about the floor, which in one place had broken under the weight. In the midst was a square hole above the deep well that gave the tower its excuse for being and made it tenable against attack. There was no windlass or rope and bucket, but a ladder made of sticks lashed clumsily with hide, up and down which whoever wanted water had to climb. I tested the ladder with my own weight, and told Joan Angela to get down into the dark hole and hide there if I should give the alarm.

Then I went out on the crazy wooden platform at the stair-head outside and waited, hoping nobody had missed me and that none had seen me carrying the girl across the moonlit enclosure. It was a wild hope, I admit, but a man throws reason overboard when it argues only pessimism in a tight place; and besides, our small party of Waziris were celebrating victory with their friends who swarmed over the wall, chanting a battle-song, greeting friends, exchanging boasts, and some searching the bodies of the dead for loot. I could see Grim and Narayan Singh trying to persuade some of them to mount guard on the defences. King had not appeared over the wall yet, and it was impossible to guess what he was doing in the dark, but I could hear voices somewhere midway down our flank of the ravine.

My perch on the platform gave me a view of all of the enclosure that was not in shadow, and of acres of darkness and moonlight to the northward beyond the wall. Crags like glistening teeth arose in irregular rows and curves out of silvery mist that seemed to float on a coal-black sea. If Kangra Khan were half a leader, and his men not more than half-beaten, our position was likely to become as untenable as his had been—and that before we should have much time to make our dispositions. Daylight would see us helpless.

The well in all likelihood was all that had persuaded natural warriors to fortify such an unpromising place. It was true, it overlooked the track up which we had come, but in turn it was overlooked from three directions, and unless the surrounding heights were held in force it would be worse than useless as a point of vantage. But there were circumstances connected with the well that I did not know yet, and there is always more than meets the eye when a savage's reason for taking laborious pains is not immediately obvious.

The Waziri women came up the ravine at last, loaded like pack-animals with cooking-pots, fuel, the scant supplies and the scanter remaining ammunition. The Waziris had gone to the border on plunder bent, expecting to replenish their stocks at the expense of Punjab villages and British outposts. Now they were parlous short of everything except ambition, and the women, heaving their packs over the wall, began at once to strip whatever the men had not yet taken from the dead. Such Pathans as yet had life in them received short shrift, and there were mutilations not to be described. Then one by one they threw the corpses down into the ravine, and after that the widows of Waziri dead began their wailing, keening to the night like hopeless ghouls.

Then sudden silence. Something was about to happen—none knew what—save Kangra Khan, who had the call on opportunity—and King, perhaps. There were King, and possibly fifty Waziris, still to be accounted for. Our folk within the *sangar*

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began, as if instinctively, to seek the shelter of the wall, like jackals surprized by the dawn slinking off to their lairs. Here and there a woman stayed crying by her dead mate but, except for those, within sixty seconds the enclosure seemed utterly deserted, the silence broken only by *click-click-click* as men opened their magazines to make sure, and snapped them into place again.

Then the storm broke, Himalaya fashion, and the wind came with it, as if even the elements had taken sides against us. All the wreaths of white mist that had floated like foam among the crags were whipped and whirled into one hurrying cloud, and out of that came spurts of flame as Kangra Khan's men started to woo vengeance in the name of Allah. Their yells out-dinned the rifle-fire. The range was short. They had crept under cover of the mist to a position on the nearest overlooking crag, not much more than a hundred yards away. Naturally th y supposed we had manned the tower. A hundred bullets rattled against the masonry, and I ducked in through the door, shoving Joan Angela in front of me, as another fusillade splintered the dry wood of the platform at the stair-head.

Our men did not answer yet. They seemed cowed by the suddenness of the attack. The wind shrieked, as it can only in those infernal hills, bearing the din of the firing and imprecation down toward us, making answering yells useless; and that is a worse handicap in savage warfare than odds of two to one. It is not enough to know that Allah is on your side; you must be able to assert the fact and to make the other fellow listen, whether he will or no. Curses must reach his ears to have effect. Taunts must prove to him your own contempt for danger, or the danger grows as real as he intends it shall be. Yells are as deadly as bullets, estimated by result.

I PEERED through the slits in the wall, but could see nothing except spurts of flame and hurrying white mist. But suddenly there came an answering din, whose source I could not see. Somewhere on the far side of Kangra Khan's men, King was turning a flanking fire on their position. The stutter of Kangra Khan's riflemen ceased and began again as some of them turned their attention to the unexpected enemy. It was obvious that if we hurried we could save the night. But you have to preach, and teach, and stir before you can change dumb disgruntlement into an assault against wind and mist and high-perched riflemen.

"Will you stay here?" I asked Joan Angela.

"Why?" she demanded; and I cursed all women under my breath.

"Will you hide down that well at the first sign of danger?"

"No!" she said candidly.

I did not argue. I swept her up into my arms and carried her, protesting violently, down the rickety ladder into the well-shaft, and stood her on a platform near the bottom. It was pitch-dark. You could only see a faint, square patch of dimness up above, pricked out with a pattern of abnormally bright stars. You could hardly hear the din of fighting down there, although it began to sound as if our men were coming into action.

"How dare you, Jeff! I'll not forgive you for this!" she said angrily.

"We'll discuss forgiveness afterward," I answered. "Will you stay down here, or must I tie you to the ladder?"

I took her by the wrist by way of emphasis, and maybe I seized hold hard. Hot temper and haste are bad medicine in the dark where there isn't any chance to see, nor time to explain. She misunderstood; or it maybe her nerves were overstrained, or perhaps I hurt her. At any rate, she struck me in the face with her open hand.

"Get up that ladder and leave me here, Jeff Ramsden!" she said, more bitterly than I had ever heard her speak. And I grew dumb with the anger that I dare say any fellow feels under the sting of the implied accusation. I did not answer. I went up the ladder hand-over-hand, simmering indignation like a bear driven out of his den. She called to me out of the well, but I did not listen.

"Jeff!" I heard, booming up hollow behind me. But I paid no attention.

I stepped out on the platform, in a mood to welcome bullets as a concrete insult that a man could fight back at. I was mad, that minute. Nothing mattered—neither night nor morning, nor the mist, nor odds, nor the outcome—least of all Joan Angela's opinion of me. I had had enough of that. I turned my back on it, and her, and went

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down the steps in running jumps, six steps at a time, sprawled headlong at the bottom over loose stones fallen from the roof, got to my feet in a greater rage than ever, grabbed a rifle from a man who lurked in the lee of the wall and struck him half-unconscious when he protested—then vaulted to the wall and shook the rifle in full moonlight, with my feet in blown mist and my body bathed in silver light above it.

"*Allaho Akbar!*" I roared; and I can bellow like a bull when the mood is on me.

I dare say, seen through the mist-film from below, I looked encouraging to those crouching Waziris; but I don't know why I was not shot to pieces by the storm of bullets that greeted me from Kangra Khan's position. I stood there unscathed. Rage may be an armor after all. I saw Grim, and then Narayan Singh scrambling to the wall to follow my example—heard the yelling and din of King's riflemen, and next the roar of our men beginning at last to work themselves into a frenzy with the battle-cry:

"*Allaho Akbar! Allaho Akbar!*"

Over the wall I went, brandishing the rifle; and over they came in my wake—not pausing—not firing—swept forward by the impulse that had surged in me and that carried me on like a crazy, unreasoning bull in an arena. If I had a thought at all it was to hack my way as far as possible from where Joan Angela and her opinions were. I wished never to see her again, and least of all to suffer explanation and apology. Death did not cross my mind. I was not wooing martyrdom. Anger was the all-embracing force that moved me, and it lent my feet wings, heavy and slow as they are as a rule.

No Waziri—not even Grim or Narayan Singh, who are fleet of foot—passed me on that crazy charge from our *sangar* wall to the ledge where Kangra Khan had deployed his men. We plunged into darkness, and had no breath to yell with, so the roar to Allah ceased. Maybe Kangra Khan misunderstood the silence beyond our breastwork. Perhaps he and his men believed our first yells, if they as much as heard them up-wind, were an effort of despair, that died away. They kept a steady fire pouring on the wall and, we not pausing to reply from the darkness beneath the hurrying mist, they had no means of divining what we were up to.

So we were up there and among them before they guessed we were coming, and that night's second shambles was staged on a ledge, with a sheer fall of fifty feet for whoever set a foot wrong, or was forced over backward in hand-to-hand fight.

I don't remember using the rifle as it should be used, although when it was all over I found the magazine was empty. Perhaps the fellow I snatched it from had emptied it and not reloaded. Maybe I fired instinctively and forgot it as a man forgets the breath he drew. I do know I clubbed the thing and fought Berserker fashion all along the ledge, driving Kangra Khan's Pathans along in front of me, myself untouched, not even in danger as I remember it. They quailed in front of the flailing rifle-butt, and I wake up now at night sometimes in a hot sweat, from dreaming of their bearded faces as they fell in front of me and toppled off the cliff. Some fell before I struck them, stepping backward to avoid the blow.

I don't know what Grim and Narayan Singh or our Waziris did. That was a one-man fight as far as I was conscious of it—a delirium of anger. I'm not proud of it, although they tell me the Waziris have composed a song about that fury of mine. I may say I was hardly in it. It was passion—all the brute, hereditary instincts using my strength. I don't remember how I got there, but I found myself at last sitting heaving for breath on a rock at the end of the ledge, with the blood-beastly rifle over my knees, wondering stupidly why the magazine was empty.

Grim came and told me that our Waziris were scattered in all directions in pursuit of Kangra Khan's men, and that he hoped they would find their way back before daylight. Then King came, and stood looking at me, with his back to the moon. I think he understood, for he said nothing—nothing personal, that is. He turned and talked to Grim.

"All right so far," he said. "Kangra Khan has likely had enough. But the tribes will gather now to hound the Waziris harder than ever. They'll argue they're tired and running out of ammunition. Tomorrow, or next day at latest, will see us surrounded again. Where's Miss Leich?"

Grim did not know. He asked me. I knew, or thought I knew, but that slap in the face was as fresh in my memory as

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if it had happened that instant. He had to ask me twice before I answered.

"The last I saw of her, she was in that tower," I said, jerking my thumb in the direction of the *sangar*.

Doubtless they thought my surliness was due to the reaction after fighting. They walked away along the ledge, and presently found Narayan Singh, and sent him to keep an eye on me, while they started off for the *sangar*, keeping an eye on each other for fear of Pathan knives lurking in the mist.

Narayan Singh came and sat down on the rock beside me, and he and I are such old friends that there was no need to speak unless either of us felt disposed. We were silent for perhaps five minutes, he pulling a rag through a rifle he had picked up somewhere. Presently he took the rifle off my knees, pitched it over the cliff, and replaced it with the one he had cleaned.

"That is better," he said quietly.

I did not answer. I was hardly more than conscious of his presence. Such process as was going on in my mind was hardly to be dignified with the name of thought, but I was dimly aware of contentment that he should be there; and because he was not of my race I preferred him just then to either King or Grim. I felt he might be less inclined, and less able than they to interpret my state of mind and draw conclusions. But I was entirely wrong.

"*Sahib*," he said presently, running the fingers of his right hand upward through his beard, "all women are the ——. Of two, the more beautiful is the worse; and of three, the youngest."

"What the —— do you know about women?" I asked him.

"This: That a man's own error is reflected in their faces; his goodness or his badness, his strength or his weakness in their hearts. A man sees himself in a woman, and the more he loves her, the worse the vision shocks him. So he goes off and acts like the madman that he naturally is—even as an ape making faces at himself in a stolen looking-glass."

"You're polite!" said I.

"I am the *sahib's* friend. I am a man who has seen much—including my own heart in a woman's—at which I look no longer—having no delight in it."

I was about to answer—hotly, it may be—when we both heard some one scrambling breathlessly up the track. In a minute Grim came stumbling over stones along the ledge.

"Miss Leich!" he said. "Where is she?"

"In the tower," I answered, aware of an uncomfortable premonition.

"No," Grim said, "she isn't there."

"She's down on the platform at the bottom of the shaft," said I.

"No, she's not," he answered. "We've looked everywhere. She's gone! No trace!"

CHAPTER V

"All earth is full of wonders."

THERE were rifle-shots, stray for the most part but now and then in ragged volleys, among the crags around us as our Waziris pursued and sniped the retreating Pathans. There was not even a guard over the supplies within the *sangar* wall, and even the women had taken the trail in the mist to pounce on wounded and strip the dead. The *sangar* was empty of all except King, when Grim, Narayan Singh and I arrived breathless. King was sitting on the bottom step outside the *sangar* tower, looking like a spectre with a film of gray mist blowing by him.

"She's gone!" he said, not getting up.

"Have you searched? Have you shouted?" I asked.

"Shout all you want to in this wind!" he answered. "Unless she's lost her head and run away down-wind toward the border, you couldn't make her hear ten yards away. And if she's run off in a panic she'll be either miles away, or dead, or a prisoner. Shout, though, if it suits you!"

"She never was in panic in her life," I said.

And I would have said more, but Narayan Singh interrupted me—a thing he rarely, almost never did. His usual method is to wait until everybody else has had his say, and then after a pause to say extremely little.

"We might at least try down-wind, *sahibs*," he broke in. "So, we would be on our way home. If we find her, we can make tracks for the border, lying up by day."

"You fellows go," King answered. "I've a pledge to keep. I promised these Waziris, if they'd help me tonight, I'd stand by them until they reach their own villages."

"——!" muttered Grim. "I'll stay with you, of course," he added.

Narayan Singh waited for orders, and I

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said nothing. Mixed emotion makes me speechless as a rule, and the notion of describing exactly what had happened in the well had left me—as I think Narayan Singh intended. We were all in the deep of discouragement. Narayan Singh was plucking at his beard irresolutely.

"*Sahibs!*" he exclaimed suddenly, stepping up to windward of us to spare noise. "Is it not best that Jeff sahib and I should undertake this task?"

King eyed me and nodded. Grim was silent, but tossed me three clips full of pistol cartridges. I knew he hated to be left out of any difficult or dangerous employment, but his loyalty to King was paramount, and it was obvious that two would be better than one on either venture. None, except possibly Narayan Singh, had any confidence in the outcome.

"Let's go," I said. "So long, you fellows."

I remember we did not shake hands.

So Narayan Singh and I set forth with the wind at our backs and climbed the *sangar* wall, dropping down on to the track along the side of the ravine that we had rushed with such enthusiasm but a short while back. The lower end was now no longer in the moonlight, and out of the solid-looking blackness down there the only sound that came was the cry of jackals, long since attracted to the feast of slain.

I don't know to which of us it occurred first that three jackals had come slinking the wrong way—toward us—out of darkness into moonlight—up-hill—without apparent reason. Nothing in nature happens undesignedly. We both came to a standstill. The Sikh's ears are sharper than mine, and he heard something that caused his fingers to clench tight on the barrel of his rifle. (He had left his sword with King, as likely to get in the way, and probably more useful to King now in any case, if only as a symbol of authority.)

There was nowhere to hide in the moonlight, and it was not easy to go forward silently among that loose shale, but that was the only course open, so we picked our way carefully, pausing to listen at intervals. In spite of our care, the noise we made scared away a pack of jackals that were nosing something just within the dark zone; they scampered away, whimpering. Then we heard low voices, and another sound. Narayan Singh sprang forward, and I after him. But when we reached the corner where the tracks forked on either hand of the Gibraltar-rock, there was nobody there.

Nobody—and nothing, I thought, except a jackal lurking near us, and an owl that swooped, and swooped again, afraid of us, but bent on an investigation. Suddenly the jackal threw caution to the winds and scurried by within a yard of me, seized something in the darkness under the cliff, and scampered away with it. I swung a blow at him as he went by, missed, but could see that he had something in his mouth.

So I stooped in the shadow and groped. Narayan Singh did the same. Each of us found something. I picked up a leather legging—mate to the one the jackal had pounced on. The Sikh produced Joan Angela's cloth riding-hat. Beyond question, both articles were hers. There was even a strand of her brown hair caught in the hat-band; it glistened like gold when I stepped back into the moonlight to examine it. But there was no blood on the hat, nor on the legging, and I could feel none on the stone where the things had lain. We did not dare strike matches.

"She is not dead," said Narayan Singh.

"They've stripped her, and chucked the body over the cliff," said I. "We'd better climb down there and drive the jackals off."

"Nay," he said. "If they had stripped her, they would have carried off the garments. And since some were left, then why not all? She is alive, and not far away. She herself has removed these, for reasons. Notice, *sahib:* They were not thrown away at haphazard, but lay side by side, as a soldier, or a lady, would have left them. And they lay on a prominent stone, where whoever passed would see them in daylight. Yet she was unseen when she laid them there, or whoever saw would have taken them surely. She is alive, and did this purposely."

It was possible she had removed the leggings to make running easier. I had noticed how the things caught on the backs of her boots when she walked, and the lower edge of the one we had found was worn shiny with the friction. But why the hat?

"She and I had a misunderstanding," I said, hating to refer to it but forced, in order to make my meaning clear. "She may have felt so piqued that she has decided to make her own way back to the border."

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"Nay, *sahib;* for she left the hat and leggings on a stone beside the way, where we might see them. That is proof that she wished to be followed."

The Sikh's argument seemed fair enough, and yet I found it unconvincing. I recalled a woman who had once deliberately wandered off for the sake of causing trouble, knowing well that I, whom she detested, would feel compelled to search for her and being her back. Such memories do crop up when they can do the most harm. I saw a mental vision of Joan Angela in hiding near by, chuckling at the thought of my disgruntlement.

But that unpleasant idea vanished when I remembered that we had heard more than one voice as we came down-hill. I began to hunt about for tracks, but might as well have looked for a subway entrance, there in the dark, on those dry rocks.

"There be two ways," said the Sikh, "for we know she is not in the *sangar* up behind us. If she left the hat and leggings for us to see, I think she will have left another sign to show which way she took. Let us try the likeliest first."

So we strode side by side in the dark along the right-hand fork that curved around the Gibraltar-rock, and came presently to the outcrop where, I suddenly remembered, we had left a horse standing. I had forgotten all about the beast, and believe Narayan Singh, too, had forgotten, until that instant. The beast's droppings were there still warm and in a heap, for he had stood still patiently. I struck a match at last, sheltering it between my hands. There was the mark of a man's sandalled foot imprinted plainly in the dung, and pointing along the track, away from the corner behind us.

That proved not much yet. There was nothing likelier than that a lurking hill-thief had come and stolen the horse. I could see no sign of Joan Angela's footprints. But Narayan Singh scouted forward, and at the end of about a minute stood and waited for me. When I reached him he showed me a hairpin stuck into a rolled-up piece of soiled, white cotton cloth —the sort of stuff the Hindus use for making turbans.

The Hill-women don't use hairpins—not of that sort, at any rate; nor do they pin a piece of cloth so neatly; nor would they have dropped such a long piece and left it; as a bandage, or a tape to tie bundles with, it would have been too valuable.

"That is her sign, *sahib*. We go forward," said Narayan Singh.

So forward we went in a hurry, with our choice between making a noise and being waylaid, or going too slowly to have any hope of catching up, and making some noise in the bargain. It was impossible to move silently in the dark on that rough track. We broke into a run at intervals; and at the end of about a mile of up-and-down-hill scrambling we had to pause for breath.

"I am thinking of that prisoner you let go, *sahib*. What was his name? I mean the man whose hands were tied with the reins from off the second horse," said Narayan Singh when he had breath enough to speak.

"Akbar bin Mahommed," I answered, louder than was necessary, because the thought spurred emphasis.

"Aye! Akbar bin Mahommed!" said a voice from a ledge up above us, and we both jumped nearly out of our skins.

I took aim at the sound, seeing nothing, not meaning to shoot, but by way of instinctive precaution. But Narayan Singh pushed my rifle up.

"Not so, *sahib*," he said quietly. "We are two, against we know not how many. "O—Akbar bin Mahommed!" he called out, pitching his voice to an almost falsetto note, to make it carry.

There was no answer; only the echo and re-echo, wailing away and away into the distance. He called again; but only more echoes, and then silence, punctured by the distant crack of a skirmisher's rifle.

WE CLIMBED up on the ledge, and it took us ten minutes of strenuous scrambling, hauling each other up in turns, since we could not find even a goat-track. There was nothing on the ledge, and no body, although we found a way down, that led to a spot fifty yards beyond where the track, that we had been following before, forked. So we followed the new direction, throwing caution to the winds. It was no use trying to go silently. Whoever lay in wait for us had an easy task in any event. We did better to save time and husband strength by striding at ease, if the phrase can be made to fit stumbling through stone-strewn shadow.

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Whatever King's and Grim's predicament might be, we were pretty surely now cut off from hope of reaching them. The dawn was beginning to announce its coming, cold-gray in the east. The wind changed and blew more chill. I felt hungry, and wondered what Joan Angela might have to eat, supposing she were really still alive; tired, and wondered whether she were not exhausted, even though she had the horse; hopeless, because of the absurdity of going further, with all those ragged hillsides swarming with ambushed men, and daylight due.

"That man Akbar called to us for some good reason, *sahib*," said Narayan Singh.

But I did not answer. There was no use in saying what I thought. We were enough discouraged. I remembered tales of how those Hillmen will decoy a man until he stands exactly where it suits them best to murder him. We were easy marks, at the end of our tether, leg-weary, beginning to grow thirsty, and without supplies. I sat down, and the Sikh chose a rock beside me. For a while we sat in silence. Then—

"Akbar bin Mahommed!" a voice croaked from a ledge above us.

I turned swiftly, and this time, because the dawn was brightening, I caught sight of a man's head in a notch between two boulders. It was there for a second, and then gone. Narayan Singh got to his feet.

"Sit down," I said. "If he's an enemy, we're easy prey. If he's a friend he'll watch, and see we're not coming, and call to us again."

So we sat still, nervously alert for sounds. But we sat for at least ten minutes, and the sun rose in a sea of color, tipping the hills with gold, before anything happened. Then the same voice called, from the same place, and I saw Akbar bin Mahommed's face between the rocks, with a thin wisp of smoke blowing along the wind behind it.

"In the name of Allah, the All-merciful, the Lord of all, this way! I am thy friend, Ram-is-den!" he cried out. "May my offspring eat me if I lie!"

"Are you alone?" I called back.

"Nay, since He who sees all is everywhere! But when ye come we shall be three men."

"And a woman?"

"Nay!"

Hope, that had sprung in an instant, was dashed again. However, the smoke suggested breakfast. We began to climb, Akbar directing us at intervals from overhead, counseling caution and warning us to keep our heads low.

"For, though I am a friend, there be those who are not!" he explained, as if he were announcing something new.

At the last he reached over the ledge and seized me by the hand, helping me to swarm the ten-foot scarp. And then the two of us hauled up Narayan Singh.

There was a cave at the back, and thence the smoke came. The opening was two-thirds blocked by a boulder, but it was a drafty hole, shaped roughly like a curved gourd, full of the acrid smoke from a small fire of dung and sticks and litter, on which, of all unexpected things, tea was stewing in a battered, enameled-iron kettle.

"Where is the *sahiba?*" I demanded.

"God knows," he answered naively.

"*You* know!" I said, seizing his arm and giving him a jerk to make him face me.

"Who knows the way of a woman?" he retorted. "The animals—the rocks—the wind—men's hearts—a man may understand. But not women. Allah forgot to make them comprehensible."

"He made me easy to understand!" I assured him, backing him against the wall. "I'm going to learn from you where the *sahiba* is, or kill you."

"Then thou art a wizard, Ram-is-den! Read my heart! Tell me what is written there that I myself know not!"

"Tell me first what you do know," I demanded.

"Be seated then, *sahibs*. Who am I that I should not tell truth? And see: I have tea that I stole from the fattest *bunnia* in Dera Ghazi Khan—very good stuff indeed, and stewed thoroughly. Moreover, eggs; behold them! Nine chupatties—lo, three apiece! A woman will be beaten presently because her man lacks food. I gave her the tea not long ago, and she was beaten for not saying whence she had it. Such is life, *insha'lah!* Bellies ache for food. None but Allah knoweth whence a meal comes. *Sahibs*, it is pleasanter beyond the fire, where less smoke is. So, with your honors' good permission, eggs! Three eggs apiece—a hen's best effort, in the name of the All-Wise! We must drink tea from the kettle, having no cups. It is hot. Beware of it. I tried to steal cups, but there were none."

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He paused with his mouth full of eggs and chupattie.

"Where is the *sahiba?*" I repeated.

"Ah! She? God knows. I was telling what *I* know with your honor's favor, when your honor interrupted. *Sahib*, I am *thy* man. We are friends forever. None shall thrust a feud between us. I went forth with swollen wrists to find a set of garments, is it not so?"

"And to bring a holy youth to me, alive," I reminded him.

"Ah! That one! Such a simpleton he is! Take another egg, *sahib*—none save Allah knoweth whence a meal comes. Let the hen not have labored in vain! Lo, I went forth with swollen wrists. Is the smoke offensive? Let us tread the fire out. It is cold, but the sun is rising. Sons of evil mothers might observe the smoke. In the name of Allah, no more bloodshed than is necessary. If they come here we must kill them, and the hills are full of dead already. So. Lo, I have a sheepskin. It was warm when I took it, for a woman slept in it. I will lend it to your honor until the sun gets high. Thereafter it will serve for pillow for the three of us, *inshallah*."

He tossed the sheepskin over my shoulders and sat down again. I sat closer to Narayan Singh to let him share it, for the whistling wind was keen. Akbar bin Mahommed resumed his tale.

"So I went forth with swollen wrists to do your honor's bidding, we being friends, whom none shall separate. Who am I, that I should not tell truth? God witnesseth. There is a village on the shoulder of the hill that men call Iskanderan, none knoweth why. Thither I went, bearing in mind your honor's wishes, much exercised with wonder how this cunning purpose might be accomplished, yet hopeful, since Allah knoweth all—aye, even the unlawful ways of women! So I came in great haste to the village on the humped-up shoulder of Iskanderan, my wrists still hurting. And I lay, praying Allah for cunning and courage, in the shadow of the stone wall that surrounds the evil-smelling place. God witnesseth. He heard me.

"Lo. The house of the man, whose wife, I am witness, has more than once deceived him, stands thus, at the corner of the wall, with a flat roof, and thereon a breastwork—easy to defend, and hard to enter. Had the man been there, we three were not in this place now. But Allah, who is All-wise, put a hope of loot into the fool's head, and he was one of those who prowled the hills last night to strip the slain—a very jackal. May his eyes drop out! May he learn in good time what his wife is, and eat mockery! The dog!

"All earth is full of wonders. It happened his wife had obeyed him, and lay within, behind a locked door, snoring, for I heard her. There was none else in the house. To right and left the wall is lower, and I chose the darker side, leaping the wall and descending silent-footed in the piled cowdung. None heard me. Allah is my friend.

"I went to the shed where they keep the hens, and wrung a hen's neck lest she make an alarm. Beneath her were ten eggs. The hen is yonder, *sahibs*, in the corner, proving that I lie not. I cut her throat before the life left. Those I hid where I could find them presently, and then crept to the woman's door. But I dared not beat on it, and she slept like a bear in winter.

"None the less, it was dark, for the peak above the shoulder of the hill shut off the moon—an unwise situation for a man's house, whose wife and *Um Kulsum* are one!—and a beam projected. Moreover, there are crannies in the stone into which a man's toes may be thrust. Allah is my friend. I reached the roof, whereon was a trap-door opening outward—by the favor of God unlocked. I opened and descended.

"Whereafter, after a while, the woman gave me tea and this kettle, and chupatties that were waiting against her man's return. Those I hid beside the eggs and hen, returning to have further word with her, she having unlocked the door that admits to the yard, in fear of me who might so easily betray her, and in greater fear of neighbors to the right and left. An evil conscience, *sahibs*, is by Allah's favor a good man's opportunity. Lo, I practised on her fears.

"The crazy youth who preaches new politics, wearing fine clothes and the white turban of an *uleema* since he went to school in Samarkand, slept—so she told me—in a house on the far side, and alone that night, since all who had the courage were on foot in the hills, in search of loot. He has no wife. I bade her go bring him, on any pretext. She is very fair to look at. She refused. But her husband had left his second

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knife—lo, this one!—hanging by its girdle from a rafter. I showed her the edge of it.

"By and by she brought the youth, he much enamored—yet presently much more afraid of me, and of the point of the knife at his belly. A simpleton, though full of politics! Clean-shaven like a fool, though old enough for a beard a foot long. Brave with long words, but as fearful of cold steel as a camel is of ghosts. And in love with the woman.

"So I promised to betray them both to the woman's husband, unless obedience were the very breath he breathed. And I stripped him naked, rolling his clothes in a bundle—white turban and all. Thereafter I bade him go and hide his nakedness in garments fit for a man, and to return, and to come with me on a certain errand; for I bore in mind your honor's wish that I should bring him living and unhurt.

"But he was over-fearful, and more evil-minded than the witch who gave him birth! When he had clothed himself, by Allah it occurred to his treacherous mind that I was alone in the house with the woman; and if he aroused the village, she and I could be taken red-handed, he acquiring honor, and we caught like rats in a cess-pit!

"So he wakened two or three, and they others. And before I knew it, as the Most High is my witness, there were nine men, mostly old ones, but a youth or two—and one in his prime, whom I will slay for his insolence if Allah wills—all beating on the door and demanding entrance.

"So I whispered to the woman, bidding her say that shaven fool had sought to seduce her and had started this false alarm for vengeance on her because she refused him. Then I left by the roof very silently, closing the trap-door after me and dropping down into the dung, the knife and the kettle clanging together as I fell. But I leaped the wall before they saw me, and they searched in vain, some swearing the clang of the kettle was this thing, and some that, while I lay crouched in a shadow. Allah is my friend.

"I heard them questioning the woman. And I heard her lie, like the *Um Kulsum* that she is, first none believing her, then one or two; and then all believing her, because there was no trace of me, and the shaveling lacked an explanation for his change of garments. So they beat him for having wakened them, and drove him home with a threat in his ears that he should make his reckoning with the woman's husband. And I returned over the wall for the eggs and chupatties and the hen, finding them where I hid them, though an egg was broken where a fool in search of me had set his heel on it, leaving nine.

"I DID up the food in the bundle of clothes, hung the kettle to my belt, and with the knife held ready set forth to find your honors, praising Allah, who is Lord of Virtue, and my friend. Lo, *sahibs*, here I am, by Allah's favor! Yet not without a happening on the way. Not by any means.

"I set forth. To myself I laughed, because the man whose wife had served my purpose is a cuckold, who shall learn it at the proper time, and eat shame, and be shot when he picks a quarrel with me. None the less, I was filled with regret because the shaveling I had promised I would bring lay dreading the dawn and the woman's husband. Allah put a thought into my heart. Lo, consider how He works to preserve His friends! A miracle! It crossed my mind that the shaveling would gladly come away with me, for great fear of the woman's husband. I turned back, minded to regain the village on the upward side where his house is. So I chose another trail, and as I turned along it, by the grace of the Most High I heard footsteps!

"There was the clank of knives and rifles, and the heavy tread of men returning with a night's loot. I lay behind a rock, and soon I saw moonlight shining on the faces of three men—that woman's husband one of them. Had I not turned back when Allah put the thought into my heart, it had been I on whom the moon shone! Your honors would not have breakfasted! They had three rifles each, and clothing, and some bandoleers, and what not else. I let them pass, though it burned my heart not to possess at least one rifle.

"When their backs were toward me I set forth again, abandoning hope of the shaveling, but praising Allah, who had brought the fool to mind. And I reached unseen the corner where your honor had befriended me. But the fight was over, and I heard stray rifle-shots beyond the *sangar;* and after considering a while I guessed that your honors' great valor and cunning had put Kangra Khan to flight. So I approached

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the *sangar*, and found only dead men lying there.

"The women had been busy. Women are women, *sahibs*. The dead were in many pieces, and as for loot, the thieves—may Allah curse them!—had left not so much as a button or a finger-ring. But they had left their own stores unguarded, so I helped myself. Thereafter I went to the watch-tower, where the sacred well is, minded to drink a little of the water that protects a man against red-sickness and the bullets of a foe, *inshallah*.

"*Sahibs*, may the Lord of all forget me if I lie! I was half-way down the ladder, when I jumped at one leap to the top! This heart of mine, that is a man's and beats in one place sturdily, remained there! When I reached the summit it overtook me, and returned into my bosom with a thump, causing every hair of my body to wriggle like a worm! *Mashallah!* Did a voice from the well not speak to me? And am I the wind or the water, that I should hear such a marvel and not feel terrified? Nay, by Allah, I was flesh, and very nearly decomposed!

"Nay, I heard not what the voice said. I was afraid, *sahibs*. He who is afraid hears fear, and nothing else. Said I to myself, there is a devil in the well, fouling holy water! Should it truly be a devil, thinks I, in the name of Allah I will show that is no place for him; and if it is a man in hiding, well and good; his spirit shall go where no living man can ever see it! I got me a good-sized stone, about as heavy as a man can lift with two hands. I hove it, thus, above my head, standing back a little from the well-mouth, lest the devil come forth, or a man shoot up at me. And I stood on tip-toe, thus. I raised a shout to Allah to direct the aim and smite His enemy. The voice spoke again from the well, and I answered it!

" 'Ho! In the name of Allah, and of His servant Mohammed, I, Akbar bin Mohammed, answer thee!' I shouted.

"And I flung the stone—a great stone, *sahibs!*

"*Mashallah!* He is great, and wise, and wonderful! He knoweth all. He foresees and predestinates. I told you how I stood a little back, lest the devil come forth, or a man shoot up at me. The stone, too, slipped a little in my hands as I strained my strength to it. And lo, it hit the well wall. Lo, it bounded off and smashed a ladder rung. Then lo, it splashed into the water. And, *Mashallah!* when the echo of the splash was finished, a beautiful voice like a houri's came forth, saying—

" 'Akbar bin Mahommed, why do you try to kill me?'

"Aye, English, *sahibs*. The voice spoke English."

He paused, the silence eloquently illustrating an emotion much too deep for words. It was a full minute before he took up the tale again.

"Now the houris speak the language of the Koran, *sahibs*. English is an unknown speech to them. So I reasoned this must be a woman. I am not afraid of women. Nay! A woman has her reasons to fear me, or to admire me! Until I lie stricken in the dark by some man's bullet, and the hags come forth with knives, I will fear no woman! So I stepped to the mouth of the well with a second stone—a smaller one—intending this time to make better aim.

" 'Come forth!' I called to her, hoping thus to hear her as she set foot on the broken ladder rung, and to direct the flight of the stone, with Allah's aid, accordingly.

"*Mashallah!* As my head appeared between the well mouth and the stars, she fired a pistol at me! But, as Allah is All-merciful, the bullet missed!

"Thereafter the voice like a houri's came forth again, speaking angrily. And He who governs all things opened my ears and understanding, so that I knew her for Joan-angela Sahiba. And I said again—

" 'Come forth!'

"And when her face appeared above the well-mouth, looking white and angry, with such little English as I have I bade her praise the name of Allah, the All-merciful, who had sent to her assistance such an one as me, and not a dog of a Waziri, who might have offered her insult and worse things. Whereat she laughed, and we were friends. A most wise, excellent *sahiba!*"

CHAPTER VI

"Allah is my friend."

"NEVERTHELESS, I took her pistol, *sahibs*. Excellence in women is a thing of dangerous uncertainty, like the temper of bazaar-bought knives. Nay, she did not fight me for it. Nay, she did not see me take it. She had thrust it in her

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pocket. Lo, see what a pretty toy it is. One of these nights I will use it on the husband of the woman at Iskanderan, *inshallah!* Has the *sahib* ammunition that will fit? Such stuff is hard to come by in the Hills.

"Allah! But the *sahibs* are impatient. I was coming to that part when your honors interrupted. Lo. She remembered me perfectly. It might have been that she had rescued me, and not I her! She began giving orders at once, and to ask more questions than a man with a book in his hand could have answered in a night, so that I knowing little English, was at my wits' end how to answer. Nevertheless, when a man is at his wits' end, Allah still provides. There came a thought to me.

"I recalled how I had left my bundle in a dark place near the corner where the track forks, lest the women who follow those Waziris—whom may Allah curse!—should find it while I might be busy with some other matter. Those hags would steal a hair from a jackal's tail! Moreover, it was well I did so, for I had enough to carry that I had lifted from the Waziri's packs in the *sangar*. And now I had the *sahiba* to manage also.

"I remembered your honor's purpose in freeing my wrists at the time when we swore friendship. Had I not risked more than life—aye, honor!—to bring the clothing of a shaveling for the *sahiba's* use? Who am I, that I should risk so much in vain? Lo, I would clothe her, that she might be safe! I would bind the *uleema's* turban on her head, that none might lift hand against her! Hah! I remembered then that she is your honor's wife, and I praised Allah for the opportunity to prove true fealty! I bade her come with me.

"And lo, she would not come! Of such stuff are women made—may Allah rot them all, saving ever your honor's privileges! By the Forty Martyrs and the Prophet himself, I was enraged! There was shooting in all directions. An accident might happen any moment. The Waziri hags might come—your honor might be dead—in Allah's name, a hundred things! Yet I bit the anger as it surged, and swallowed it again, like a man who has overeaten. And I lied to her—I, who have lied to no man—I, who love truth as an eagle loves the air. But a woman is a woman. I said your honor was down the track a little way, and had sent myself to bring her thither.

"Whereat, when I had told the lie a second and a third time, and she understood, she came with me. The wind blew mist across the *sangar*, veiling the moonlight, and she helped me carry the trifles I had lifted from Waziri packs. Together we fled across the *sangar*, and over the wall, and down along the track between the cliff and the ravine, both breathing hard, for we were loaded, and what with one thing and another making more noise than was wise. It was in my mind to hide away the trifles I had taken, and to clothe her in the shaveling's garments from the other bundle; then to return and to find your honor, thus accomplishing all purposes in one. I strode ahead, she following as close behind me as the nature of her burden permitted. It was heavy.

"So. As Allah is my witness, I heard voices; and I knew some ill-begotten sons of evil mothers were in hiding at the corner where the road forks. And because of the nature of that place I knew they could hardly lurk there very long without discovering the bundle I had left under a heap of stones. If they had already found it, then my night's labor was in vain, unless I were stronger than they, and more cunning. Allah is my friend.

"I bade the *sahiba* sit down where she was and be still in the shadow of an overhanging crag. I laid my load beside her. I drew this knife. And I went forward, praying to the Lord of All, and not forgetting the *sahiba's* pistol that I had borrowed when she came out of the well.

"*Sahibs*, there were six men at the corner; and a seventh, who kept watch between me and them—a misbegotten son of Belial, whom Allah blinded and made deaf and dumb, lest he hear me, or see me, and give the alarm. His Majesty be praised! I slew the fool, severing the wind-pipe at a blow, and he went over the cliff, making no more noise than a stone that the wind and rain have loosened.

"I heard the six exclaim—a lousy gang they were, with tongues that took the Name of Names in vain. They called to the dead fool who had stood watch with his eyes shut, and I answered them, changing my voice to sound as if I were chewing something. I said a stone had slipped down under my weight; whereat they called me a noisy

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fool, and continued talking to one another. They were lurking there for fugitives from the fighting, intending to rob, like the sons of *Um Kulsum* they are.

"So I took thought, and Allah is my friend. I stuck the knife into my girdle—lo, the blood, *sahibs*, in proof I lie not! I gathered two stones in either hand, and those I hurled into their midst. Then I fired the pistol four times, jumping this and that way, that it might seem I was many men. And I shouted, as if to men behind me, rushing forward, kicking stones before me as I ran. Whereat they all took to flight, except one man, who stood his ground and fired at me. Him I slew with the knife, and he fell over backwards into the ravine. In the devil's name, he took the rifle with him, and I hope his soul may scorch forever in hell-flame!

"I found my bundle, *sahibs*. The besotted fools had not seen it. I returned to the *sahiba*. I unwrapped the bundle. Then I bound it up again, for I remembered that a wise man takes all precautions. Lo, it was darker down near the corner, and easier to hear if any one should sneak around from the other fork of the track—moreover, easier to hide the plunder there in case of accident. Together we bore my belongings down to the place where I had conquered seven men; and there in the dark she tucked her hair up, and I set the red cap on her head, and I bound thereon the white *uleema's* turban very carefully.

"I bade her remove her outer garments, but she refused. It was well enough, for she is slender and well-shaped, whereas that shaveling grows fat from easy living and his clothes would have hung loosely on her. All she would take off were the leggings; and her stockings and the laced shoes were like the effeminate things a Hindu wears when he has had an education. All passed muster, save that she is better-looking than the shaveling, and without his swaggering conceit. In the dark she would pass for a man; and surely none would shame himself by slaying one who wore the white *uleema's* turban. I was satisfied. I praised Allah, and bethought me of your honor's good will presently to be bestowed.

"Allah be my witness that I lie not! I set to work to hide those heavy burdens, this kettle and the food first, then what I had lifted from the Waziri packs, intending nothing but to go then in search of your honor and to deliver the *sahiba* into your honor's keeping. Who shall read Allah's mind?

"The kettle and the food were safely stowed. I was searching for a place to put the other things—a large enough place, *sahibs*, for I had helped myself!—when a voice spoke in the dark beside me! The *sahiba* checked a scream. She is brave. She felt for her pistol, but I had that, as I have told you. And it was just as well, for the voice was a voice I knew.

" 'O Akbar bin Mahommed,' he said softly, 'I am Ali, thy brother, and I need thy aid.' "

"Nay, *sahibs*, he is not my mother's son, but a man who follows Kangra Khan. He and I once swore blood-fellowship. But now I have a grudge against him, and he shall pay in full! Mistaking the *sahiba* for a man, because of the darkness doubtless, for she has not yet learned how to carry herself, he whispered to me, minded not to let another hear.

" 'Up yonder in the *sangar* I slew the *sahiba*,' he told me.

"So I answered that he lied, he protesting.

" 'Aye,' said, he 'I slew her, and here is the proof of it.'

"And he showed me the sleeve of her long coat, torn off at the shoulder. Whereat I thought it best to humor him, so I asked him, what then?

"And he told me Kangra Khan had sent him lurking near the *sangar* wall to seize the girl and carry her off; but that he had come near death, and had slain her with his fingers at her throat rather than fail entirely. He escaped, so he said, by a miracle, and so, returning to Kangra Khan at a place appointed, had told his tale, expecting praise. Yet Kangra Khan grew furiously angry, cursing him for having thrown away a *crore* of rupees, miscalling him outrageous names, and threatening to have him flayed alive by women before a fire. Yet Ali is a man whom Kangra Khan has loved exceedingly, and when Ali begged an opportunity to make such amends as might be, the favor was granted. Yet not an easy task! Nay, nay!

" 'Go,' ordered Kangra Khan, 'and bring me that man Ram-is-den, living and unhurt, in the girl's place. Thus we may yet win a ransom!'

"So Ali set forth. He did not tell me that

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he took ten men with him. May Allah roast him in eternal flames for that!—for he and I were brothers.

"AND LO, while Ali and I talked, the ten came sneaking around the corner, curse them! One knocked me down by a blow on the head from behind, believing doubtless he had killed me—but Allah is my friend. They seized the *sahiba*, and all that plunder I had not yet hidden, and they ran—I following, as soon as the blow ceased from echoing in my head, and my eyes could see, and I stand upright.

"Ali had run too; but he shall not run very far! His next long march shall be on the road to ——! Aye, it maybe they gagged the girl, for she did not scream. But the next time I caught sight of her she was riding on the horse, between four men, and not gagged nor in any way molested.

"Great—great—great is the Lord of All, and praise be to His Prophet! Lo, I laid my head between my knees in a frenzy—in a supplication! I was like a woman in labor of child. As a man was I who is torn between four camels! Allah! Go I forward to rescue the *sahiba*—eleven they be, to one! And who am I to fight eleven men? Shall I search among the crags for my friend Ram-is-den—whom Allah bless!—and tell him I have lost his wife? *Mashallah!* What a storm of wrath I must endure then! What a lightning! What a thundering! For thou, O Ram-is-den, art a man of muscle and great anger—a hearty man and headstrong, whom I love, and whom, *inshallah*, I would rather serve than kill!

"Nay, I dared not seek thee, Ram-is-den! What then? Shall I follow? Shall I lurk, and call to the *sahiba* to escape to my protection in the dark? Nay, nay! She is a woman, unused to darkness or the Hills—one woman against eleven men. If she attempts it, they will slay her. If she comes to me, then clumsily she comes; and they detect us both, and slay us both, and gone is mine honor! What else? Shall I stay there, then, and wait for Ram-is-den to come to me in search of the *sahiba?* Nay, by the Forty Martyrs! Ram-is-den will pick a feud with me, not waiting for a true account. In haste and anger he will smite, for his honor's sake, because his wife is lost! And who am I that I should lie in wait and slay my friend? So there was no course open to me. I smote my brow and my breast in vain. Shall I run away? Shall I run home? Shall I hide, and forget? Then may Allah hide, and forget me!

"Allah is my friend. He who knoweth all things put a thought into my heart. Lo, I go forward. Lo, I follow and observe. As a jackal tracks the leopard, lo I keep downwind of them. Said I, if she were my wife, and I Ram-is-den, would I not very swiftly clap my foot and frenzy on the trail? As a she-bear whose young one has been netted Ram-is-den will pursue; and are the leggings and the hat not where the *sahiba* laid them? He will pick up the scent and come swiftly! He will see the horse-dung, and maybe a footprint—mine! for I laid it there.

"*Mashallah!* Who in all these hills can stalk as I can? They went swiftly. Yet not so very swiftly, for the horse was a sorry beast, and ill-fed, and must keep the track, helped even so by ten men at the broken places. I could hear the blows they struck him, and his floundering—she protesting. The *sahiba's* voice was as a golden bell, and they made her be silent; but neither knew the other's language, so it maybe they gagged her again. As Allah is my witness, I can not speak as to the truth of that.

"I kept the higher ground. I know the short cuts. Not a leveret—no quail—no kite—no jackal knows these hills as thoroughly as I do, God preserve me! So I followed, keeping one ear and an eye for Ram-is-den. And by-and-by I heard thee, O father-of-an-elephant. And by-and-by I called to thee, lest devils steal the light of Allah from thee and decoy thee on the wrong trail. Allah is thy friend, and mine.

"But by the holy hair of the Prophet's Beard, there came to pass a worse befalling than any yet! For Allah willed that they eleven should be met by Kangra Khan's men—thirty and upward, as I lie not!—and there was a fight with knives. No shooting. Nay, and so the *sahiba* was unhurt. I crept close. I heard all, seeing little because of darkness. One slew the horse, and I went closer yet, hoping to seize the *sahiba* and carry her off while the fought among themselves.

"Lo, but their bellies were full of fighting for a while to come! They fought, and they argued between whiles, none shooting, lest Kangra Khan might hear and make pursuit. The thirty sought to persuade the eleven to run away home; and they knew who the prisoner was, for one had seized

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her when the horse was slain, and the outer garment tore, showing the woman's riding raiment underneath. There were groans and oaths in the dark, for some were wounded; and one man, seeking a place where he might sit to bind his leg, sat on me, who lurked between two stones. I slew him. He made no sound. But he was not my brother Ali. So I crept in search of Ali, hoping to slay him, and seize the *sahiba*, and carry her off while they argued.

"But lo! As birds cease chattering and take wing, they agreed and were gone! Between two breaths they were gone, with the *sahiba* in their midst! And I, seeking the rifle of the fellow I had slain, found none. He was a dog—a yellow dog—a snooter-among-dung-heaps—armed with nothing but a butcher's knife stolen from the stalls in Dera Ismail! Lo, behold it! The bull, whose throat was cut with such a thing, died, by the Blood of the Prophet, of shame before the dishonorable skewer touched the skin!

"Allah! They were gone like wind! Like jackals afraid of the dawn! And by that I knew they would not go far; for he who fears the dawn, and fears the leader he deserts, loves caves. And there be great caves hereabouts. Great caves and little ones, among which Kangra Khan might hunt a year in vain; for there are run-ways in between them; hunter and hunted may play at hide-and-seek forever!

"I was confounded. I had failed. Yet not so! Allah is my friend. I thought of Ram-is-den, whose belly, thinks I, by this time is as hollow as a drum, and whose great bulk is an easy target in the dark. By Allah, had I not carried the kettle all this distance, and the eggs, not breaking one! Shall he who is my friend be hungry, and I have food? May He who seeth all forget me, if I as much as think of it!

"So by Allah, I hied me to this place; and I gathered little sticks, but not enough of them, for where are trees in all these hills? Yet Allah brought a thought to mind, and I remembered where the Kumara-Afridis hid the bulls they lifted from across the British border a year ago. So I brought dung—and lo, a good fire. Then water. *Sahibs*, I was hard put to it for water! Allah bear me witness how I prayed!

"Lo, water! Had we not tea? Was the stuff not excellent? There are no wells hereabouts—none nearer than the great cave, whither it maybe they have taken the *sahiba;* though there is a good one there, in a ravine between the great cave and the next one. But observe, *sahibs:* in the direction of my finger, northward, that way, lies a village so evil—so black with shame—that Allah cursed it, and the wells ran dry three months ago. And I bethought me how the women rise before dawn, and walk many miles for the water, with a man or two guarding them.

"Allah guided me. I found their path. And an old hag had a sore foot. Lo, she sat in a hollow place with the water-crock still balanced on her head because it was full, and too heavy to raise in case she set it down. So I gave her a new pain to offset the other, and filled the kettle from her crock, she weeping anew because now after she reached home she must make a second journey; for they swill water in that village like pigs on the plains of Hind. Women are women, *sahibs*. None may understand them. The hag was not at all pleased to have slaked the dry throats of honorable men. So I smote her and ran, for I heard others coming, and the men who guarded them with rifles were of a certainty not far away. So, tea, praise be to Allah!

"Then ye *sahibs* came. And here we sit in Allah's sight, who seeth all. We have eaten and drank, and have a hen to cook—scant fare, indeed, for three men, yet better than emptiness. *Inshallah*, there is good luck awaiting us. I am thy friend, Ram-is-den. May God forget me, if I lie! And as for this man—he is a Sikh, yet I will befriend him for thy sake, Ram-is-den. I love thee. Great is Allah!"

AKBAR BIN MAHOMMED sat still, eyeing me with that burning gaze of the Northerner, that by intensity and concentration can detect the very thought behind guarded speech. And he smiled; for he saw I was in no mood to find fault with him. He believed Joan Angela was my wife, and he had failed to protect her; moreover, he had failed to keep his promise to bring the "shaveling" alive to me. Maybe he had acted unwisely in a dozen ways; and he was certainly a rogue—a murderer—a conscienceless thief. Yet I wish I might be half as faithful in my obligations to a friend. The only claim I had on him was that I had loosed his hands. His promise to me had been made under

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duress. He would certainly be killed, and doubtless cruelly, if Kangra Khan should ever learn the truth and happen to lay hands on him.

"We must take the trail at once," said I.

But Narayan Singh said nothing, and Akbar bin Mahommed took snuff from a box made of two brass cartridge-cases, offering me first helping.

"Nay, nay!" he said presently. "In the name of Allah, sleep! These hills be full of hunted men. I know the Hills! Pathan and Waziri are at one another's throats. The sides men took mean nothing now. Each one for himself, and the shortest road home! Loot—that is all that matters! By day, the men whom we are seeking hide and none save Allah knoweth where; yet we would be a mark against a skyline. When the night comes they will fare forth; and we likewise. In the dark all men are equal, and numbers nothing against cunning. Sleep, *sahib*. Wait for the night."

I met Narayan Singh's eyes. He and I had the same thought.

"Turn about!" he said gruffly.

"Then ye two take the first spell," said the Hillman, snatching the sheepskin from off our shoulders and rolling it up for a pillow. "Sleep there together, while I watch."

"I will keep the first watch," said Narayan Singh.

"Nay, it is better that I do," the other answered with growing impatience. "I will sit in the cave-mouth and watch what may happen on the country-side. So when night falls I shall know better what to advise."

"Thou and I together then," said Narayan Singh.

The Sikh's hereditary, ingrained distrust of the Hillman, reenforced no doubt by long experience, was not to be offset by a tale of a night's adventure. Whether he believed or disbelieved Akbar bin Mahommed's story, he did not propose to trust him.

But it seemed to me we had small choice. If we should offend him, he might turn against us as swiftly and as savagely as he had hitherto tried to serve. Should we two prove too many for him, he could easily slip away and bring friends to his aid by promising them a share of the loot. Without him we were helpless. We must keep his friendship at all costs—take all chances. I drew out my pistol and passed it to him, butt-first.

"That's in proof I trust you," I said. "Keep it for me while I sleep. Narayan Singh, give him your rifle!"

The Sikh obeyed. He did not like it, but he is the bravest fellow in the world when it comes to obeying orders against his inclination. Akbar bin Mahommed grinned, understanding the mental conflict perfectly.

"May I eat dirt," he said to me, "if I break faith, as Allah is my witness, Ram-isden! And as for thee—" he smiled a trifle thinly at Narayan Singh—"I am thy friend for his sake!"

"Of which the proof will be the outcome!" Narayan Singh answered none too tactfully; and then came and lay beside me.

So we slept, with our heads on one rolled sheepskin, and our lives were for a number of hours in the hands of Akbar bin Mahommed, thief by religion and murderer by habit!

CHAPTER VII

"I will not slay thee, even to possess the Tooth!"

I DON'T dream much as a general rule. The blow I received on the head the night of my capture by Kangra Khan's men may have had something to do with it. There may be something in environment. Sleep on the hard floor of a drafty cave, side by side with a Sikh, with your head on a sheepskin and a professional murderer keeping guard, after a night of prodigious fighting and a meal of hard-boiled eggs and cold chupatties, is conceivably disturbing to the normal mental processes.

I dreamt Joan Angela walked straight into the cave, and sat down beside Narayan Singh and me to talk with us. She was dressed in riding-kit, without the turban and accessories belonging to the "shaveling." She seemed her normal self in most respects. She was apparently uninjured, and not exactly unhappy; but her delight in adventure for its own sake seemed to have entirely disappeared, and she was pale—calm—serious.

"This fighting has got to be stopped, Jeff!" she said as soon as she had sat down. "I refuse to be responsible for any more of it."

I forget what my dream-answer was; perhaps I made none. But Narayan Singh, who in the dream was squatting cross-legged beside me, leaned forward tracing

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figures with his finger in the dust of the cave floor, and after a pause spoke sententiously, as his way not seldom is.

"The truth," said he, "is true. It is one; and there is no alternative."

Explain that how you like. I can't make head or tail of it, but in the dream it seemed apt and enlightening. Joan Angela nodded.

"Attempts to rescue me," she said, "can only lead to more fighting, of which there has already been too much. Yet if I agree to pay the ransom, that will only lead to more kidnaping; and I do not choose to be responsible for that either."

All this while, in the dream, some one—Akbar bin Mahommed, I suppose—was sitting in the cave-mouth keeping watch, but making no comment, as if the whole proceedings were entirely in order. Narayan Singh appeared particularly undisturbed, but even more than usually thoughtful.

"Yet if you were to be killed," he said, "that would be the cause of more fighting than ever, since the British would feel themselves obliged to punish the Tribesmen, and they, disliking to be punished, would resist."

"Very true," said Joan Angela. "So I must live, although life among these people is unpleasant. They eat so disgustingly; and I don't know their language. However, I can learn it; and when I get hungry enough I shall eat without distress. But you must not try to rescue me. I will go with them; and you must go the other way, and tell people I am very likely dead, so that the British won't send an expedition."

"That is wisest," said Narayan Singh.

I heard those three words "that is wisest" as distinctly as I can now hear the clock ticking on the wall of this lime-washed hospital. Then I awoke, full of indignation, and stretched out my hand to prevent Joan Angela from going; for in the dream she had started in great haste to leave the cave. My hand struck against Narayan Singh. The blow awoke him, and he sat up. Blinking, we both stared at Grim in the cave-mouth, sitting on guard with two rifles and a pistol in his lap! Akbar bin Mahommed was not there.

Narayan Singh looked into my eyes and nudged me. I nudged him. We were both awake.

"Is it you, Jim, or your ghost?" I asked.

"It's me," said Grim, and went on watching something down below the cave.

"Where's King?" I asked.

"Who knows? Licking the Waziris into shape, I hope," he answered.

"Any news of Joan Angela?"

"No more than you have. I've been listening to Mahommed bin Akbar."

"Where is he?"

"Gone to look for her. Just went. We talked over various plans, including one that he should scout for news of her whereabouts, and I concluded that was wisest."

"What time is it?"

"High noon, or a little after."

"Have you slept?"

"No."

"Eaten?"

"Yes."

"Better sleep now, hadn't you?"

"Yes, I think so, if you're through."

He looked so deathly tired that I had not the heart to question him further until sleep should have restored him to his normal taciturnity. Then he would be sure to tell us all that was essential, if no more. So when he had given the Sikh his rifle, and handed the pistol to me, he went and lay down where we had lain, and fell asleep that instant.

Narayan Singh and I sat in the cave-mouth, saying nothing for a long while, watching as much of the landscape as we could see in either direction, with especial attention to the kites, whose movements as a rule betray the whereabouts of any considerable parties of men.

"Did you dream a while back?" I asked him at last.

"Aye, *sahib*. The *sahiba* came. She spoke. In the dream we were squatting down beside her.

" 'I go,' said she, 'to the village belonging to these people; and there I think you will find me alive, if you should travel fast enough.' And I said in my dream, 'We come, *sahiba*.' And she said, 'When?' I answered, 'Tonight.' And she said to me, 'That is wisest.' Then the *sahib* woke me with a blow across the jaw that tingles yet; and lo, Jimgrim was sitting there!"

I hove a great sigh of relief. Not both dreams could be right. My old nurse used to say dreams go by contraries, but even so, both dreams reversed would still remain opposites. We were to go, and we were not to go. We were to rescue her, and we were not to rescue her.

"Stewed tea and hard-boiled eggs!" said I.

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"Chupatties!" said he. "Cooked by a Hill-woman—phaugh!"

Yet neither of us quite dismissed his dream from mind. We sat there on the *qui vive*, listening to Grim's snores, and peering in turns around the rock that blocked two-thirds of the cave-mouth; and when we conversed at rare intervals it was more of the dreams than of how Grim came to be there. Narayan Singh you might say is a specialist in such matters, accepting as obvious facts what to the West would seem crazy theories.

"The dreams mean this, *sahib*," he said after a while. "We shall rescue her. Nevertheless, whatever plan we make will be a bad one, leading only to more bloodshed; whereas the true plan will be unfolded by the Gods. Being blind, we are unable to do right. Yet going forward, we can not set one foot wrong. We are but agents in these matters."

I would like to believe him. It would take the worry out of nine-tenths of existence. But I notice that he, too, worries on occasion in spite of his convictions; and I wonder just how much of his philosophy he honestly believes, and how much is habit.

He worried more than I did as the sun wore down toward the west and there began to be signs of movement here and there among the ugly crags. The wind began blowing half a hurricane, whistling into our cave and drowning out most other noises; but once in a while we heard sniping, and twice a yell reached us that told some one had hit the living mark, or missed.

Grim slept on. He can worry, too, but seldom when he has faced a situation and made up his mind on a course; so I judged by the calmness of his sleep that he had fully decided what to do and was characteristically storing up strength for the effort.

AFTER a while Narayan Singh crept out and climbed a crag, from which to get a better view of the locality. To make the most of that he had to stand upright on the top, and was clearly silhouetted against the sky. Some one three hundred yards away began shooting at him. The first shot missed altogether, but announced the sniper's general whereabouts. The second chipped a piece of rock from close beside the Sikh's feet. The third chipped the rock again, a little to the left. The fourth shot was mine. I used Grim's rifle, and it proved to be a very good one.

Narayan Singh returned and squatted once more in the cave-mouth.

"There is smoke a mile away," he announced, "but the wind blows and spreads it. It is hard to tell exactly whence it comes. It is the smoke of many men."

I took a turn at scouting, selecting another crag, while Narayan Singh covered me. But there were no more gentry sniping thereabouts; or if there were, they took to heart the first one's fate. I stood up unmolested, and a fluke in the wind gave me a clear view down a gorge to the side of a ravine that the gorge entered at a right angle. The smoke was issuing from the mouth of a cavern, and there was lots of it. I judged they had a fire in there that would have roasted an ox; and that meant the presence of women, for the men-folk prefer discomfort to the business of gathering and bringing fuel.

Before the wind fluked again and the smoke blotted out the view I saw about twenty men sitting on a ledge outside the cavern; and that looked as if they were not in the least afraid of being seen. But I could not tell whether they were Waziris or Pathans. When I returned to the cave Grim was awake. He had raked the fragments of our scattered fire together, spitted Mahommed bin Akbar's hen on a stick, and was toasting it. We ate the bird, and it was beastly but sufficed.

"What next?" I asked him; and he was about to answer when Akbar bin Mahommed came in, munching dry corn that he had stolen somewhere.

"May Allah bless you!" he said handsomely. "May Allah make that hen enough for you! I found a fool with a bag full of this good food, who thought to knife me from behind a rock. But by Allah, as he followed me I followed him, and took him by the heel—it was a little rock. I pulled him back toward me, thus; and as he turned on his back to fight me, I drove my knife into his belly, thus; and he has no more hunger, whereas I would have been starving presently! Moreover, I did Allah a great service, ridding the earth of a pig who cumbered it! He was a——"

"News! What news have you brought?" demanded Grim.

"Oh, as for that, I did not discover much. I watched the mouth of that cavern from

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this side of the ravine. There is Kangra Khan with nearly a hundred men. I did not see the *sahiba*, but I know they have her with them, because those outside the cavern keep peering within curiously. The wives of some of Kangra Khan's men are there; they brought fuel, and much food; from time to time they carry water, and there is a great cooking going on. I think they have determined on a long march. I think they will go home."

"How many days' march?" Grim demanded.

"Eleven days, if there is no fighting on the way. But it is slower by night; and if there is fighting, who knows?"

"Are you from Kangra Khan's village?"

"Praise be to Allah, no! I come from a decent place, a half-day's march from his dung-hill. Lo, my home is in the shadow of the graves of holy ones, whom Allah bless! Mine is a town of fair women—a city of delights—a paradise! His stinks! I would not live there. I came southward looking for a profit after all the big talk Kangra Khan made, but that dung-hill of his is the mother of buzzing flies and naught else—words without a doing at the end of them!"

"What's the name of the place?"

"They call it Kangra Khan's. It deserves no better name."

"And the name of yours?"

He would not tell. The more he was questioned, the more he fell back on evasion. Whether it was superstition or mere caution it was difficult to guess, but he was resolute; he would not name the place he came from.

"Allah knows its name!" he answered. "It is a city of trees and splendid buildings. There is a mosque a dozen times more lovely than the Taj Mahal!"

"Have you seen the Taj Mahal?" Grim asked him.

"Nay. Why take the trouble? Have I not seen the mosque in my city? There is nothing fairer."

"Well," said Grim, "to get to your home, must we go by Kangra Khan's?"

"Aye, if Allah wills. Between here and there it might be there would happen fighting!"

"And the Waziris? Where do they live?"

"Over beyond. Forever to the northward. They are not true Waziris, but a cross-bred spawn who fell heirs to three villages because the Afridi, who used to live thereabouts, were too weak to withstand them. They will never get home. There are too many tribes on the watch, and no friends anywhere! And if they did reach home, they would find the Afridis waiting. Show me that Tooth of the Prophet, *sahib*. Bless me with it! I have in mind to loot a few Waziris before too many Pathans get the first pick!"

Grim thought a minute, then produced the "Prophet's Tooth." It looked as if it had been in a rain-washed skull for centuries. He had it folded in a piece of paper, on which was some writing in Persian characters, and he held it carefully, giving Akbar bin Mahommed no more than a glimpse of it.

"It can curse as well as bless!" he said meaningly.

"I bade thee bless me with it!"

"Aye, but I will curse thee with it, unless thou art amenable!"

"To what?"

"To me!"

"*Mashallah!* Thou art an Arab. Shall I obey an Arab? Thou truly art an Arab—is it not so?"

"Aye," said Grim, "a Hajji. Thrice I have made the pilgrimage to Mecca."

"Thrice blessed one!" said Akbar bin Mahommed. "Nay! I will not be cursed! What then?"

Grim seemed to hesitate, but I knew that he was acting; he had made his mind up. He clutched the tooth in its paper wrapping close to his breast, as if he loved it. His eyes glowed as he stared at Akbar bin Mahommed, and he seemed to recognize in the Hillman's face something splendid—something that thrilled him. Yet he clutched the tooth again, and seemed to wage a war within himself, forcing himself at last to speak.

"Thou art a man—a very man—a man indeed—a good man, art thou not?" he asked.

"None better!" said the Hillman modestly.

"And a good chief thou wouldst be?"

"Aye, had I but a following. But the fools follow others."

"They would follow the Tooth of Mohammed, the Prophet of God!"

"Aye!"

"And thee, if it were thine!"

"By Allah, would they not! Nevertheless, thou art a holy Hajji, and I will not slay thee, even to possess the tooth!"

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Grim looked astonished. His jaw dropped. Astonishment gave place to wonder—wonder to admiration—admiration to excitement—excitement at last to a measure of caution. It was marvelous good acting.

"Near the place where the Prophet of Allah used to pray in the holy city of Mecca, a very holy and white-bearded sheik, who used to pray there seven times daily, waiting for the hour when he should die, gave me the blessed Prophet's tooth," said Grim.

"Peace be to him! In the name of the Most High, peace to him!" said Akbar bin Mahommed.

"Thrice seven years had he waited there, praying seven times daily in that spot, keeping all the fasts. And when he saw me, he knew me instantly, having oftentimes beheld me in a vision in a dream," said Grim.

"*Allaho akbar!*"

"He pressed the blessed tooth into my hands, thus, wrapped in this paper that bears the Prophet's blessing written with his own hand."

"*Allaho akbar!*"

"And he laid a charge on me."

"Thrice blessed one!"

" 'Go thou,' said he to me, 'to the mountains northwest of Peshawar, where thou shalt find a man—a warrior—a very Rustum—whose name shall be an attribute of God, and whose other name shall be the Prophet's.' That might be thou," Grim suggested.

"I and no other!"

" 'With him have word,' said he. And he described the man to me, signifying such an one as thou art—even with a white scar like a star, five-pointed, on the face between the eye and nose."

"Allah! Surely he meant me then!"

" 'But I charge thee in the name of the All-wise,' said he, 'to have great care, lest the holy Tooth should fall into evil, incapable hands. For the Tooth is for that one whom thou shalt meet; and when he shall possess the Tooth he shall straightway become a great chieftain.' "

"It is I, and no other! Give me then the Tooth!" exclaimed Akbar bin Mahommed.

"And he spoke to me after this wise: 'There is a good man, who shall have the holy Tooth, and a bad one, who will greatly desire it. Each of them will say these words to thee: "Thou art a holy Hajji, and I will not slay thee, even to possess the Tooth." Nevertheless,' said he again, 'thou shalt know the good one from the evil one after this manner. Lo, he who is evil will refuse to obey thee. But he who is good will obey thee in all things for an hundred days, or until such time as thou releasest him. To him, when he has obeyed thee, give the Tooth, with my blessing in the Name of Names. He shall be a great chief.' "

Akbar bin Mahommed's eyes burned. His fingers clutched his knife-blade. He could have killed Grim for the Tooth that instant, but for his own vow not to, and for a certain dim sense of the proprieties.

"Lo, I obey thee! Have I not obeyed?" he asked, with bated breath. Excitement had him by the throat. He could hardly speak.

"Not yet for an hundred days," Grim answered. "Nor have I yet met the second man—the evil one. When I meet him——"

"Ill for him in that hour!" the Hillman interrupted. "I will slay the dog in Allah's name! I will hack him into pieces and burn the foul bits on a dung-heap! It is I who am the good one, I assure thee."

"Maybe," Grim answered. "We have yet to prove that. Lo, there is a great trust laid on me, and I must put thee to the utmost test."

Akbar bin Mahommed thumped his breast and laid his forehead on the cave-floor. Then, looking straight into Grim's eyes:

"*Inshallah*, I will not fail!" he said simply. "I obey thee. And moreover, this being the will of Allah and the charge of the holy sheik, it must follow that I pass unscathed through all things! Can I die, and yet possess this Tooth? Nay. Then since I must possess the Tooth—for that is written—surely I can not die! Lo, then, I am a lion! Lo, not Ali was a safer one than I! I may dare all things! Obey? I will obey thee if the order is to walk through fire——"

"By the Forty Martyrs, I am not a madman!" answered Grim, judging his customer shrewdly. "What good would it do me to see a fool singe himself? It is my orders, not thy boastfulness thou must obey!"

"Say the word, and I march to Mecca, Hajji!"

"Nay, for then I could not keep an eye on thee."

"Bid me slay an hundred men!"

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"Not thou but I must choose the orders."

"Choose, then, Hajji! Be swift! My bosom burns! By Allah, I obey thee if the order is to—" he glanced at me, and grinned—"to fight this Ram-is-den!"

"Nay, Ram-is-den is my friend," answered Grim.

"I will slay you the Sikh, then!"

"He likewise. It is I who choose the deeds that must be done."

"In Allah's name then, choose thou Hajji! Be swift with the beginning!"

Little the Hillman guessed what a taskmaster he was dealing with. Grim's eyes, whose color is all mixed of gray, and blue, and brown, so that those who know him hardly ever agree as to what their color really is, hardened—lost their romantic gleam—grew cold, with a different fervor. Narayan Singh, who knew that sign of old, caught his breath sharply and leaned forward.

"Does Kangra Khan know you have taken the part of the *sahiba*, and of this *sahib*, and of this Sikh?" Grim asked.

"Nay. How should he?"

"Does he know you were made prisoner?"

"Surely. Why not? I was prisoner or dead man. Allah! What else should he think?"

"But those men, with whom you fought in the dark? Your brother Ali? Will they not tell Kangra Khan you are alive and a traitor?"

"Nay, I know them! They will say I was stealing the *sahiba* on my own account, having made my own escape. They will show the loot I took from the Waziri packs. They will say she watched it for me. Kangra Khan will laugh, saying I am a greater thief than ever!"

"Presently," said Grim, "before the sun sets, thou shalt go with me to the cavern where Kangra Khan is. Thy first task is to introduce me to him, winning his great favor in consequence, boasting thou hast persuaded me to show him favor."

Akbar bin Mahommed looked first incredulous, then crafty. Then his face lit with guile and greed as all the possibilities of this new turn of events dawned on his imagination.

"Allah be praised, who designeth all things!" he exclaimed. "I understand thee! I will slay this Kangra Khan, who is a cockerel from a very smelly dung-heap. Then thou shalt give me the Prophet's Tooth, and proclaim me chief. Thus shall the prophecy be fulfilled! Thou art a wise and cunning fellow, Hajji—I a strong one and a bold! Hah! *Inshallah*, I shall be a great chief; and there shall be a war such as these borders have never before seen!"

"There shall be a cursing such as thou hast never heard!" Grim hastened to assure him.

And with that, he passed his hand over his mouth, removing the plate that holds in place the false teeth of his upper-jaw on either side. His cheeks sunk instantly. It changes the whole expression of his face, making him almost unrecognizable. Then he scowled, squinted inward, thrust his tongue between his teeth, and made a noise in his throat that resembled something boiling up from within him. He waved the tooth in its paper packet to and fro.

"Nay, Hajji! Nay! What have I done? Nay! Keep thy curses for an enemy. I am thy friend—indeed thy friend! By Allah, I will obey thee! Say the word, and I will nestle Kangra Khan to my bosom. I will slay his enemies! I will——"

Grim's aspect changed, although he did not let a hint of a smile escape him.

"I begin to believe thou art truly the one," he said nodding.

"Aye. By Allah, I am he. No doubt of it!"

Grim passed the tooth to me. With utmost outward reverence I stowed it out of sight.

"These two," said Grim, pointing to Narayan Singh and me, "are made custodians of the Holy Tooth until such time as I, and no other, bid them convey it to thee. Thou and I are thus freed—I of danger, and thou of temptation."

"I would not slay thee, little Hajji!"

"Nay, I know it! And it would be yet more difficult to slay these two men. Moreover, should accident befall me—for none knoweth when his hour comes—these two will keep the Tooth, because they may not part with it without my order."

"Little Hajji, how I will preserve thee! None less than Allah shall do thee a harm! I will nurse thee like a fledgling! But who shall preserve them?"

"Allah, who is Lord of all," said Grim.

"Yet the one is a Sikh, who is damned, and the other an Amelikani whose God is a dollar, as all the world knows! A pious

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Moslem would deem he did Allah a favor by driving a bullet through both of them!"

"That is why I have appointed them custodians of the Tooth," said Grim. "It will preserve them both."

Akbar bin Mahommed saw the force of that, but he was far from satisfied. However, it was no use arguing with Grim; a very *kaffir* * could have seen that the Hajji was full to the brim of retorts and evasiveness, and besides, the longer he talked the longer it would be before he won the tooth and with it a key to chieftainship. By the look in his eyes he already saw himself unquestioned ruler of a thousand villages.

"I am ready. Allah is my witness," he said proudly—simply. No crusader starting for the Holy Land ever felt, or looked more consecrated.

Grim turned to me and spoke in Arabic, which might as well have been ancient Greek as far as Akbar bin Mahommed was concerned, although he could mouth a few Koran texts from memory.

"I don't care to meet Kangra Khan before dark," he said. "That night when he first called on us the fire was between him and me, but even so he might recognize me, even with my teeth out. I have no plan, except to get word with Miss Leich, and if possible to discover what Kangra Khan intends. He may march tonight. As soon as it's dark you two go as close as you dare. I'll try to get in touch with you, so keep a look out. But if I fail to do that, and Kangra Khan marches, follow on our heels."

"What about King and the Waziris?" I suggested.

"He's already to the northward, trying to work between Kangra Khan and his probable objective. He'll try to persuade the Waziris to put up another fight, but they're short of ammunition and may prefer to scatter and run. In that case King will try to raise some other clans to hound Kangra Khan. There's nothing certain. The next half-hour may see us all dead. On the other hand, we may rescue Miss Leich tonight. You fellows must be alert and use discretion."

Narayan Singh grunted. He loves commands of that kind. Once in Palestine they gave him a letter to carry across the Jordan and down into Arabia, with leave to use discretion; and he was so discreet that he came back uninjured, with an answer and two camel-loads of loot. Besides, he knows those gruesome hills more or less, having campaigned among them rather frequently when he was in the Indian Army. He was all I had to rely on, for I don't know those hills at all; and though I understand the *lingua franca*, I speak it with an obviously foreign accent.

It does not amuse me to be sniped by dark or daylight. I believe Narayan Singh enjoys it. I enjoy a stand-up fight, although I'm ashamed to admit it; but cold steel in the dark gives me the shudders. Narayan Singh prefers cold steel to rifle-fire. Grim revels in work, and seems to have no preferences. He went and stood in the cave-mouth, back to the light.

"Allah keep you, my brothers. Allah give you strength and courage. Allah bless you!" he said—and was gone.

"Huh! I know a thousand gods superior to Allah!" growled Narayan Singh.

CHAPTER VIII

"Now, you fellows!"

IT WAS blowing a gale of dry, cold wind when Narayan Singh and I left the cave. To the westward there was the last light of a yellow sunset on the bellies of aloof clouds —liars like the Hillmen, threatening a rain they had no notion of delivering. It was darker than a coal-hole underfoot, for the moon had not risen, and the rocks cast shadow everywhere. No stars yet visible, because of those high-hung clouds. No sense of direction; no guide but the feel of the wind on your cheek and, now and then, when we topped a rise, the crimson glow of flame in the throat of a cavern a mile away. A mile, that is, as crows are said to fly; about five miles by the route we had to take. The wind seemed to blow clean through you.

We scrambled and stumbled for about two hours, more or less in an arc of a circle, helping each other over steep places, and grateful for the shelter from the wind when the road—for that was what Narayan Singh called it, and he swore it was a good one for that neighborhood—dipped into deep hollows. How he found the way I don't know, for once he went more than half an hour without catching sight of the crimson glow; but we halted at last and lay down in the eye of the wind on a ledge half-way up the side of the deep ravine opposite the cavern

* Unbeliever.

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in which Kangra Khan and Joan Angela were supposed to be.

It was nearly, but not quite impossible to keep watch there, for the bitter wind made our eyes run; and it was so cold that when I borrowed Narayan Singh's rifle and took a sight along it just on general principles, I could not hold the foresight on the mark for trembling.

However, we could see the glow of the fire; and at moments, when we wiped our eyes, we could see men, or perhaps women, going and coming.

"They carry the loads out," said Narayan Singh. "They march tonight."

No sign of Grim. No sign of Joan Angela. Nothing to show that either she or he was over there. Both, for aught we could prove, were lying dead in the ravine, and about all that we could do was to hope and hang on. Now and then the wind swept down the ravine with such force that it nearly blew us off the ledge, and at last I grew rebellious.

"This isn't as close as we can get," I said—down-wind into the Sikh's ear. "I'm going closer."

I did not wait for him to object, but started there and then to clamber down into the ravine, not caring how much noise I made, nor seeking cover, for we were in shadow on our side, and sound was borne away so swiftly by the wind that none who might hear could judge our whereabouts.

None did hear—not even the man I stepped on, who was no more aware of me than I of him until he felt my weight between his shoulders and tried to squirm out from under. Narayan Singh dropped down beside me on another man, nearly breaking his back, and in a second we were fighting blind-man's-buff in total darkness, with long knives whickering to right and left, and nothing to be seen at all.

Narayan Singh clubbed his rifle; I heard the butt descend on something, and a cry as a bone broke. Then I thought I saw something at last—fired at it point-blank with the pistol—and hit a horse. No doubt of that whatever. It was a shod horse; it kicked, and struck sparks as it fell. Some one fired back at me, and then a voice said—

"By any chance is that you, Jeff?"

I would have known King's calm voice in a thousand! Narayan Singh exploded one great guttural monosyllabic laugh. I heard King calling off his men; and he had his work cut out, for we had injured three, and tempers run quick and high in those infernal hills. But he managed it somehow, and came in the dark to stand between us, smoking a cigaret, which he held very carefully in the hollow of his cupped hand.

"Let's hope Kangra Khan's men didn't hear your pistol-shot," he said, "Where's Grim?"

I told him where I hoped Grim was, and he nodded.

"How many men have you?" I asked him.

"Fifty," he said, "less three you've hurt. The rest have cleared off for home, but they stand no chance of getting there."

"Grim thinks you're to the northward," I told him.

"Couldn't make my fifty march," he answered. "Our only chance is to nab Kangra Khan as he comes out. Tonight or never! Another morning'll see all the Hills out after our Waziris. I've promised these men, if they'll see this through, to try to lead them back across the border, where we'll let 'em take refuge until the situation clears a bit."

"Any sign of Joan Angela?" I asked him.

"None. But there's somebody or something important in there, that they're keeping out of sight. By Gad, I'm worried about Grim. I should have seen him. The firelight betrays any one who passes the cavern-mouth.

"Tell you what," he said after a pause, "one of us should go close and find out."

Narayan Singh volunteered for that duty almost before the words had left King's lips, but King suggested I should go too, because his men were none too pleased with us for having put three of them out of action, and it would be easier to calm them in our absence.

"Cover each other," he said. "If you can, let Grim know where we are. When Kangra Khan starts to lead his men out, duck! for we'll ambush 'em, and there'll be wild work. Then see if you and Grim between you can't bag the girl and get away with her. If she's shot, that's kismet. Our best is the best we can do for her. So long."

So Narayan Singh and I set out to cross the floor of that ravine, moving a lot more cautiously than when we dropped down to the ledge. The next we were likely to meet would be foes, not friends, and it was probable that Kangra Khan had his pickets

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posted within hail. Once Narayan Singh nudged me and we lay down listening; but all I heard was my own heart-beats, and the wind whistling overhead.

When we started again I could see about twenty men in front of the fire-glow, and it occurred to me they were taking long chances to stand silhouetted in that way, with enemies all about them in the hills. They seemed to be deliberately trying to attract attention. The same thought occurred to Narayan Singh.

"Let us hope King sahib sees them," he said, coming close to whisper in my ear. "I think those Pathans have heard their friends are coming, and unless King sahib is alert he may be caught between two fires."

"You go back and warn him!" I ordered. "I'll wait here."

The wind and darkness swallowed him, and I lay there on a flat rock hugging my pistol, with the owls swooping close to take a look at me—swerving down-wind and circling up again for another look. A jackal sniffed my feet, and yelped. The men in the cavern-mouth drank something hot out of a kerosene-can, passing it from one to the other and apparently laughing—although the wind carried all sound away long before it reached me. They were plainly feeling confident.

It was easier to watch from where I lay than it had been on the ledge, for the wind did not worry my eyes. I kept my gaze fixed on the fire-glow, hoping not to miss Joan Angela, or Grim, if either of them should pass in front of the fire. You could probably have fired a rifle within ten yards of me without my knowing it. My ears ached from the pressure of the cold wind. I was taken absolutely by surprize when a cold hand was laid on my neck from behind, and a voice said in Pushtu:

"The Tooth, Ram-is-den! Give me the Tooth, or I slay thee!"

Lord knows, men fight for idiotic reasons! I fought for that tooth from a savage's rain-washed skull as instantly and with no more argument than if it had been a regimental colors, or my personal fortune—using a jiu-jitsu trick, turning suddenly on my back and kicking upwards with both feet. Akbar bin Mahommed turned a summersault in mid-air, and when he fell I was on top of him, with my knee on his belly and his knife-wrist in my left-hand. He had not let go his knife, and I accept that as proof you could make a sportsman of him if you had the time, and took the necessary pains.

"Thou elephant, I joked!" he gasped when he could get some breath.

"How did you find me?" I demanded, working at his wrist to make him drop the knife.

"Peace, thou! Let me go! Nay, Allah's mercy! Break not my knife-wrist, Ram-is-den, or I am no more use!"

I eased on the wrist a little, and repeated the question.

"I heard a jackal cry. There was likely a dead man hereabouts. Not all the dead have been stripped yet."

I eased the pressure on his belly, meaning to keep him on his back until I had the whole of his story, but he squirmed off the rock and out from under me, and though he did not offer to use his knife I covered him with the pistol. But he squatted down with his back toward the fire-glow in a gap between two boulders, and began chafing his wrist as if nothing at all out of the ordinary had happened; so I sat down too, where I could keep an eye on the cavern-mouth beyond him, close enough to him to have touched him with the pistol-muzzle.

"*Mashallah!* Thou art strong!" he grumbled. "Lo, I am no weakling, but thou——"

"Where is the Hajji?" I demanded.

"Up yonder."

"And the *sahiba?*"

"Up yonder."

He jerked his thumb over his back. We were shouting at each other as if thirty yards apart, because the wind snatched words and took them scattering down the ravine.

"What then? Why are you here?" I demanded.

"Allah! To find thee! Why else? Where is the *kaffir?*"

He meant Narayan Singh, but that was no way to refer to a gallant man, so I ignored the question. I demanded news, and he told it in gasps and snatches, showing his teeth as he spat the words out, trying to make me hear without taking all down-wind into confidence.

"*Sahiba* in corner behind fire—back of cavern—guarded by women. Hajji—Kangra Khan—growing friendly. Suspicious at first, but Hajji gave him piece of stone from near Ka'aba at Mecca. Kangra Khan

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thinks stone will bring luck, but Hajji whispered to me it will curse him. Orakzai Pathans—some say two hundred—some say twenty—sent word—coming tonight—from scuth, on way home. Kangra Khan waiting for them."

We heard nothing; but Narayan Singh loomed suddenly out of the night and squatted down beside me.

"King sahib *dejkta hai*!"* he shouted in my ear.

Akbar bin Mahommed heard the word, "King," and brought his fist down on his thigh in excitement.

"Thou!—Sikh!—thou has seen Attleystann King? Is he not to the northward? Where are the Waziris?"

"What then?" Narayan Singh retorted. "Tell thy tale, Pathan!"

"Allah! If only the Waziris were at hand! The Hajji said to me: 'Those Orakzai Pathans whom Kangra Khan expects may well be late, or may not come at all. If the Waziris should come, in the dark they might appear to be Pathans. Then Kangra Khan would sally forth to match with them, and there might be a fight and a rescuing!' Much may happen in the dark!" the Hillman added.

I turned to Narayan Singh, but could hardly see his outline. He laid a hand on my arm to draw attention to himself.

"Shall I summon King sahib?" he suggested.

I agreed, and he disappeared a second time, swallowed like a ghost before he had gone two paces.

"The danger," I said, "is that Kangra Khan may send reliable men to see who the new arrivals really are."

"Slay them one by one as they come scouting!" the Hillman retorted, brandishing his knife.

"No," I said. "You must go back to the cavern and tell Kangra Khan that his friends are here and waiting for him to come out."

"He will not believe me."

"Trust the Hajji to persuade him."

"Aye. That is better. The Hajji might come forth, and return, and report favorably. A great fellow is that Hajji. He convinces men!"

I was much too cold and afraid to take any satisfaction in the thought of a pitched battle in the darkness amid those boulders in that bewildering wind. But I could see no other hope, and it fitted in with King's suggestion. If we could solve the problem of persuading Kangra Khan to lead his men out, there was still the risk of shooting Joan Angela and Grim. The only time when they could possibly be distinguished from the others would be at the moment when they passed through the fire-light. The chance of persuading excited Waziris to spare the lives of those two, while at death grips with the rest, was remote to say the least of it.

However, there is always something you must leave "on Allah's knees," as the Moslems have it. The question is, how much? And how much is your own responsibility? If we knew that, I dare say there would be a lot less shotted argument and sudden death.

Who could tell friend from foe in that ravine at night? There would be no moon for a long time, and then only at intervals between the racing clouds. No word of command could carry against or across the wind, and to that would be added the din of rifle-firing and the yells of excited Hillmen. Yet, if we should postpone an attempt at rescue until dawn, it would be impossible to pretend our Waziris were Pathans, and we would be so outnumbered as to make fighting hopeless. Moreover, if King was right—and he usually is—by daylight the tribes would be swarming to hound the Waziris to death.

"Allah be praised! It would seem to me Kangra Khan's hour comes tonight!" said Akbar bin Mahommed in my ear, exultingly. "As for thee, Ram-is-den, that Tooth is thy preserver. *Allaho Akbar!*"

I answered him, "*Allaho Akbar*" for courtesy's sake; for I liked him better than scores I know, who use their tongues to murder with, because they are afraid of knives. I wished him luck in his aim on Kangra Khan—another savage not by any means to be despised. And I wished them both at the ——, if that might do the rest of us the least good.

"Thou art a *kaffir*, Ram-is-den!" he yelled into my ear. "It is great shame to doubt Allah! These be His ways to try the hearts of men. What is a fight, or the darkness, to the Lord of all? Whom He loveth He preserveth! Lo, He loveth me, and thou—thou hast the Tooth!"

He leaned across to slap me on the shoulder, and I have endured less tolerable pleasantries from gentler men.

*On the qui vive.

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THEN King came. He and Narayan Singh dropped down beside us, and we held a four-square conference in the hollow between tip-tilted rocks, King sitting where he could watch the cavern-mouth. His men were inaudible—invisible; but he said they were hiding all about us in the dark, and once I caught sight of a shadowy thing that might have been a rifle pointing upward.

"You understand," said King, speaking Pushtu so that Mahommed bin Akbar might feel flattered, "I must stay with the Waziris. They'd run if I left them; and besides, I've promised. We'll engage as soon as the last of Kangra Khan's men are out of the cavern. But if we make a skirmish of it without a definite objective it'll end in our just being scattered, and morning will see our finish. I'm going to try to gain the cavern and hold it."

"They'll only blockade you in the cavern," I objected; but he swept the objection aside impatiently.

"We'll attend to the day, when day comes!" he answered. "You men have got to grab Miss Leich. Be good enough not to report to me without her, dead or alive. My objective is the cavern. That's our rendezvous. Who goes to the cavern now, to tell them their friends have arrived and are waiting for them?"

"I!" said Mahommed bin Akbar.

"Good. But don't seem too positive," King advised him. "Say you detected us in the dark, and that you *think* we're the Orakzai contingent. Then suggest to them that the Hajji is the man to find out for sure, because he has been to Mecca and was made immune from bullets. If they let him come on that errand, you stay up there. The Hajji should arrange some sort of signal with them, to be made from here as soon as he discovers whether we're friend or foe. We'll make the agreed on signal, of course, and when Kangra Khan's men come out, get as close to the *sahiba* as you can. Keep her out of the way of bullets if possible. Look out for Ram-is-den and Narayan Singh. Help them to rescue her. You understand all that?"

"Aye," he answered. "But I should first slay Kangra Khan! His hour has come!"

King did not answer. He sat still, as he always does when he feels himself up against insuperable difficulty; much too wise to argue, or to do anything except to wait for a fresh development. But it was I who held the whip-hand in that crisis, though I little guessed what a rod I was laying up in pickle for myself.

"Slay Kangra Khan tonight, and you shall never have the Prophet's Tooth!" said I. "For I will break it between rocks and throw the dust down-wind!"

"Nay, Ram-is-den, that were a sin!" he objected.

"Unlike you, I am a sinful man!" I answered him. "I will do as I say. Tonight you must attend to the *sahiba's* rescue, ignoring all other issues. Otherwise, no Tooth!"

"Allah!"

"Allah witness it!" said I.

After that there was no further argument. Akbar bin Mahommed, with the Hillman's fatalistic recognition of an impasse, rose and went. King disappeared to talk with his Waziris, and Narayan Singh and I sat in silence watching the cavern-mouth. It was half an hour before we saw Akbar bin Mahommed's back against the fire-glow, where the men on the ledge appeared to be suspicious, for they gathered around him and gesticulated.

It was several minutes before we saw one man enter the cavern, and minutes again before he returned with some one who towered and bulked above them all and by his bearing might be Kangra Khan. There followed argument—gestures—much pacing to and fro—he who might be Kangra Khan breaking away from the others at intervals and striding to the end of the ledge, as if to try and peer into the ravine.

At last Grim came out, easily distinguishable from the others by his Arab dress. He and Kangra Khan stood full in the firelight, Grim stock-still, Kangra Khan gesticulating. Finally Grim disappeared from view. Kangra Khan returned into the cavern, and the others spread themselves along the ledge. At the end of another fifteen minutes Grim sat down in the dark between Narayan Singh and me.

"Where's King?" he demanded.

King came presently, with two smelly Waziris at his back, who lay down on the rocks and watched us as if their eyes could burn up darkness and read our inner thoughts. They said nothing; gave us no greeting.

"The plan is," said Grim, "that if you're Waziris I'm to trick you into staying here

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until morning, when in Allah's daylight Kangra Khan's men and the neighbors hereabouts will deal with you. But if you're the Orakzai contingent on your way home, I'm to build a fire where they can see it and show myself in front of it three times."

"Fire, at once!" King ordered; and the two Waziris who had followed him went off in search of anything whatever they might build it with.

Ten more minutes passed, and a pale moon began to glimmer through racing clouds over the summit of a ragged hill, before flames leaped up in a cleft among rocks on our right and Grim went to stand in front of it. He showed himself thrice as required, standing with his arms outstretched as if crucified. After the third time a man in the cavern-mouth took a firebrand and waved it.

"Now, you fellows!" said King, and with that he gave Narayan Singh his sword and disappeared at once to manage his Waziris.

Then Grim, Narayan Singh and I laid our heads together for a last swift conference.

"They'll come down by a sort of ramp—rough going—that slants downward into the ravine from the right-hand end of the ledge as we face it," said Grim. "Most of their loads are at the foot of the ramp already, with a few on guard. But there's a path one man can climb at a time, that joins the ramp half-way up. It's so difficult they haven't posted any one to watch it.

"Joan Angela is watched by the women. I couldn't manage to get word with her, but I know she recognized me. As soon as they come out of the cavern the women will have to pick up loads. Kangra Khan is pretty sure to keep Joan Angela close by him, with a bodyguard of his best fighters. Our only chance is to lurk and surprize 'em. It's on Allah's knees. We've one chance in a million. Are we all set? Good. Let's go!"

CHAPTER IX

"Where's the girl?"

NARAYAN SINGH praised a number of gods for what befell, and himself not at all. Grim and I thanked the wind, that tore down the ravine in gusts of fury a man could hardly stand against, making Kangra Khan believe Allah had sent the blast to favor his own retreat northward under cover of darkness. Even the fierce tribesmen of that region were hardly likely to stir on such a night, and he reasoned, as we learned afterwards, that the Waziris would take advantage of the fury of the elements to scoot for home. Consequently, none but his temporary allies, the putative Orakzai Pathans, could have signaled to him from below.

He added all that argument to his conviction of the Hajji's holiness and orthodoxy. Reason, argument, conviction are alike dangerous on dark nights, when the actual facts are obscure.

His men ignored all possibility of danger. Believing what they wanted to believe—that they were well-guarded against surprize by their allies in the ravine, they began to troop out of the cavern and down the ramp carrying the few odds and ends of loads that had not already been stacked at the foot of the ramp in readiness. And those who were first at the bottom crouched down behind the loads to shelter themselves from the wind; coming out of a warm cavern they doubtless felt it even more than we did.

Some of them carried lighted torches made of the resinous wood no longer needed for the fire—proof enough that they meant to march far and furiously, as otherwise they would have heaped the unburned fuel on the women. One group of six torchmen stood at the end of the ledge where the ramp began, perhaps to keep tally of the men who passed; and as we reached the foot of the nearly sheer side of the ravine we could see Joan Angela standing beside Kangra Khan in the torchlight.

She was still wearing the *uleema's* turban and a sheepskin jacket, but somebody had robbed her of the long smock, so that she looked like a rather wretched boy in knickerbockers. There were no women near her; they were at work; but as the torchlight wavered in the wind we could see the shadowy forms of about a dozen riflemen—undoubtedly Kangra Khan's picked bodyguard.

The chief himself seemed in desperate haste, and to be trying to instil the same ambition into his men. Once he seized a torch and beat the men who passed him, driving them with it in a hurry down the ramp. Then he returned and appeared to be speaking to Joan Angela, pretty roughly to judge by his attitude; but she stood up

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to him, and if she was afraid we could not detect it from that distance, although the torchlight shone full in her face.

Then, with an imperious gesture to the handful of men who were watching, Kangra Khan went off with long strides down the ramp, presumably to try to get some kind of order out of the chaos among the loads. It was then that we began to climb, Grim leading, and I last. As the biggest and strongest it was my job to be a stepping-block when the track proved otherwise impracticable. When they had used my shoulders to reach a higher perch they lowered Grim's girdle for me, so we went up fairly fast.

Near the top was a narrow ledge shaped roughly like an oyster-shell, jutting out about five feet below the great ledge in front of the cavern. There was just room on it for the three of us, and there we crouched, partly protected by the wall that leaned outward above us, but unseen only because Kangra Khan's men were over-confident. It was a dizzy perch, and there was a sensation as if the whole hill-side were swaying in the wind. The torchlight shone on Narayan Singh's rifle, but I neither dared to tell him of it for fear of being overheard, nor to try to move the thing lest one or other of us should lose his grip and go sliding off the smooth rock on to the fangs two hundred feet below. So the glint on the metal was seen from above; yet even that circumstance favored us.

Luckily for us the wind was playing ducks and drakes with acoustics. Who could cling to that crazy ledge, let alone reach it, without starting miniature land-slides! We were breathing hard from the climb. For another thing, the rock's unevenness was painful to hands and knees, and we had to keep shifting our weight. If we had been detected, one shove with a stick would have ended the careers of all three of us, and I think if any one had shouted at us suddenly from above, we would have jumped out of our shivering skins and slid to death! There were certainly never three men who felt less heroic than we did during those interminable minutes.

However, we received warning before interference came. We had time to cling to one another and to the rock, digging fingers and feet into crannies. Some one on the ledge above yelled against the wind in Pushtu that there was an approach unguarded. He came and stood close to us with his back to the ravine, gesticulating and shouting at the torchmen. We could only catch about one word in ten that he said, but from the general drift of it he seemed anxious about the track we had climbed by. Apparently the others took no notice of him. He moved a pace or two along the ledge, and by screwing my neck around I could see the top of his head as he peered over; but he drew back instantly and went to yelling again at Joan Angela's guards. I could not hear what he said.

Presently he came back to his original position directly above us, still yelling, and lying prone on his belly, leaned over. Then his face was just five feet above us, and I could see distinctly the dark outline of his turbaned head against the sky. I took aim with the pistol; but I had to move to do that, resting my elbow on the Sikh's back; and as luck would have it, I slipped and almost fell off the ledge, so I did not fire. It was by the grace of unseen Powers that I did not drop the pistol.

I could not recover balance without scrambling to my knees. That upset the others, and forced me to stand upright to save them. I reached for the Pathan's neck, meaning to pull him over, but he was too quick and drew back. I bent my knee for Grim to mount by, and he had his hand on my shoulder when the Pathan's face grinned again within a foot of mine, and he almost screamed at me:

"The Tooth, Ram-is-den! Have you the Tooth?"

The question saved his life, as his play-acting with the guards had probably saved ours. Narayan Singh's sword licked upward, and checked only in the nick of time.

"Ho!" the Sikh laughed in my ears, "the Gods are good to us!"

And his weight followed Grim's on my knee. They scrambled on to the ledge and dragged me after them. And as if the whole thing had been timed by G. H. Q. we got to our feet as a very hurricane of firing burst out from the ravine below us.

I would like to tell exactly what happened then, but it all happened so fast that a man's brain could hardly record it. We had the full advantage of surprize, and all the corresponding disadvantage that goes with it, not least of which is that every man acts then on impulse and reason hardly enters

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into the ensuing chaos. The torchmen began beating out their torches—all except one, who waved his flaming stick frantically as if hoping to summon friends from heaven knew where.

By that light I saw one of the bodyguard seize Joan Angela to kill her with his tulwar, and my pistol bullet tore through the breadth of him under the arms as the tulwar was in mid-air. I saw her stoop and pick the tulwar up. Then darkness. The fool who was waving the torch had flung it down into the ravine.

We four rushed the bodyguard, and the howling wind seemed to change key as nine or ten tulwars whirled thrumming to stand us off. Those Pathans could see no more than we could. They depended on speed of swordsmanship to bar the way as it were with a wall of live steel. But one man fired his rifle at random in our general direction, and I went like a rock out of a catapult, straight for the flash.

I use my fist in times like that—instinct, I suppose. My left took the rifleman full in the mouth, and he went down like a pole-axed steer. The others followed through behind me, and that broke line, nerve, resolution—everything. The remainder was panic, or riot, or hell, or whatever you care to call it—hand-to-hand, shoot, and slash, and butt-work in the dark, with the Sikh's sword striking fire on tulwar blades, and the gasping and grunting of desperate men in a shambles.

I heard Joan Angela cry aloud, and as I tore in to her aid she thrust out blindly with the tulwar and ran the point through the skin over my left ribs. I don't know how a man sees at a time like that. Forgotten, latent senses function. Two Pathans seized Joan Angela to carry her off. One clapped his hand over her mouth from behind, and the other seized her legs to stop her kicking. I used the pistol and missed both of them. The second man let go her legs and closed with me, groping for my eye to stick a thumb in it. I took him around the waist, up-ended him, and flung him into the ravine. I don't know where the pistol went, or how. I never gave it a thought until some time later.

I ran back for Joan Angela, and she was gone. Yelling for the others, with no hope of being heard against the wind, I rushed down the ramp, overtaking three men. Two went backwards into the ravine like nine-pins as they turned and met my fist. The third fired at me, but too close. I knocked the rifle up, and he staggered backwards from a blow I landed on him somewhere, leaving the rifle in my grasp. Then he ran, and I swung for him with the butt-end, finishing that business.

That gave me a weapon, but the magazine was empty. I remember jerking out the empty shell as I ran, and sticking my thumb down into the magazine with a desperate notion of finding a cartridge jammed in there. I imagined Joan Angela's throat being cut in the darkness; for Pathans in a panic will do anything.

And panic there was. For down at the foot of the ramp where they had piled the loads the darkness was alive with spurting rifle-fire and the yells of the Waziris—both sides utterly desperate—none dreaming of quarter—and no control—no chance of it. Once I thought I heard King's voice barking commands in a momentary lull, but that may have been delusion.

Then some one rushed by from behind me, and I thought he was Narayan Singh. I ran my best to overtake him, and the two of us charged neck and neck behind a line of Pathans who were kneeling along the edge of the ramp and pouring a useless fire into the ravine, each one yelling to the others he had killed a man for every shot he fired. Bullets from below, as wild as theirs, were spattering on the cliff above our heads. I tripped over a man's legs and fell, rolling like a dead man down a steep, smooth place until a sharp rock knocked the wind out of me, and I lay there shamming dead for I dare say two minutes, until I could recover breath.

Then Narayan Singh, charging and sliding down the ramp, stumbled over me in turn, and I knew the first man had been either Akbar bin Mahommed or an enemy in flight. I pounced on Narayan Singh to let him know who I was before he plunged his sword into me.

"The *sahiba!*" he yelled.

He was frantic—worse than I—neither man nor beast in that hour, but more like the embodiment of some ungoverned element.

"Krishna!" he screamed, and broke loose. The night swallowed him.

Then some one lighted a torch down there among the loads—I suppose to give the Pathans a point to rally on. The

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Waziris yelled, and the man—or the woman, maybe—who held the torch went down under a hail of bullets. But before the light died I had seen Kangra Khan and three men on a rock at the foot of the ramp. No sign of Joan Angela. I clubbed the rifle, scrambled to my feet, and went for Kangra Khan, possessed of no thought, but an impulse.

I don't now remember how I reached him. At that point there is a gap I can't bridge, of hideous, screaming night, all streaked with rifle-fire. Even in dreams there's a gap there, although most of the incidents of that night recur in sleep in intricate detail. The next I recall I was crouched beside Narayan Singh in pitch-darkness under the bulge of the rock on which Kangra Khan stood, with the rifle like a club in one hand, and the other hand on the Sikh's shoulder, to take the time from him.

WE SPRANG together, like fiends out of a hell-hole. He ran a man clean through from behind with his saber, and I clubbed another. A third swung for me with a tulwar, but missed his footing and fell off the rock. Kangra Khan fired a pistol and jumped for his life, but the Sikh caught his foot, and I closed with him.

Over we went, all three together, Kangra Khan under us, down into the hole the Sikh and I had sprung from. And now, as I write, I can hear myself yelling: "Don't kill him! For the love o' God don't kill him!" I wanted news.

But it was easier to hold an eel than him, and he was stronger than any Pathan I have ever seen. Again and again he nearly broke away from us, but at last I got him in a strangle-hold, and the Sikh seized his foot. We had him pinned then.

"The *sahiba!*" I panted. "Tell me where she is, or I'll break your neck!"

And I let him feel the pressure, by way of evidence of good faith.

But I had to ease off to let him speak, although Narayan Singh twisted his foot to remind him of urgency. And it took him about a minute to gain enough breath. Then he coughed out a bark of a laugh, and answered me.

"By Allah, I don't know!" he said, and laughed again.

Then the Sikh took a hand in earnest.

"Have you got him, *sahib?*" he asked.

Then he let go the leg, and thrust the point of his bloody saber in between Kangra Khan's teeth, standing over the two of us, with his weight poised to drive the saber home.

"Speak, thou! Where is she?" he demanded.

Kangra Khan moved his head a fraction clear, and spat before he answered.

"By Allah, I don't know, I tell you!"

The saber went downward an inch.

"Then you die like a dog!" said the Sikh.

"By Allah, I do not know!"

He asked no mercy—made no appeal—betrayed no sign of weakness. Under my knee I could feel his heart thumping sturdily, and though I could not see his eyes I did not doubt they stared up as bravely as they had ever done. If he was lying he was much too big a fool to be a chieftain in those hills, for almost any tale would have sufficed to make us spare his life for at least a little while. And I do like a man who can face death in a dark hole without flinching. I would surely not have killed him that way, without more proof than I had that he had slain Joan Angela. Perhaps he guessed that.

I bade Narayan Singh put up his saber, and he obeyed me, for a wonder, for he was pretty well beside himself. He stood waiting with the saber raised, to see what I would order next. And I surprized him.

"Rope!" I said.

It was a mad enough order to give a man on that night, in such surroundings. But Narayan Singh was in a mood to cut the heart out of the impossible. The wind lulled, and I heard his saber thwack home twice. Then voices began calling for Kangra Khan, and one man lying on his belly on the rock that Kangra Khan had stood on to direct the fighting, and peering down in all directions, nearly found us. I laid my hand on Kangra Khan's mouth; not heavily; he understood the implication well enough. I would have killed him then, if he had cried out. But he made no sound, and the man went away.

In the lull of the wind I could hear a great change in the fighting. Lord knows how, but somehow, King had got control of most of his Waziris; and though there was nothing like volleys, there did seem to be a weight of firing all directed at one place. He had persuaded them to let the piled-up

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loads alone, and to attack the ramp. The Pathans, if not stampeding yet, were in a mind for flight, for I could hear some bawling to the women to bring the loads back to the cavern, and others crying out that they should take to the hills. Between them there was a prodigious rushing to and fro.

Then Narayan Singh came, and with the moon, looking down on the scene between wild clouds. The Sikh had a long piece of rawhide. I turned Kangra Khan over and held him while Narayan Singh lashed his wrists.

"I'll kill you if you make one unnecessary sound!" I said in his ear, and then let him get to his feet while I peered around the rock.

There was a battle raging on the ramp above us that would have done the Titans good to watch. The moon showed most of it, but threw enough in shadow to give imagination rein. King's Waziris were storming the ramp in flank, and about a dozen of Kangra Khan's men were holding it with a nerve and courage that did them credit. The moonlight was against them. Those of King's men who were covering the assault fired from shadow. Kangra Khan's men were in full view, and using stones to hurl back the storming parties.

There appeared to be two points of assault. Unless the Waziris had ladders, which was out of all question, they must be swarming on one another's shoulders to reach the ramp; and the Pathans yelled and danced with excitement every time they aimed a stone by hazard true enough to hit the leader and hurl a whole storming party down. Those twelve or so Pathans were having much the best of it, but I saw four of them shot dead during the minute or two while I watched.

Then it seemed by their excitement they had detected a new, more determined attempt. Four of them hurried for stones, and the rest began shooting fast at a target they certainly could not see, yelling to one another to correct the aim, and themselves trying to take cover against a steady hail of bullets that swept up out of the ravine. There could not possibly be more than twenty men making the assault, and perhaps ten firing from the dark to cover it, because there were some of King's Waziris still shooting into the scrimmage where the loads were being shouldered, and King had said he only had about fifty men all told. But it doesn't need great numbers to make a fierce affair.

One man hurled a stone from the ramp that apparently hit the mark, for the Pathans broke cover and danced and yelled in chorus. But I heard King's shrill whistle below, and another attack began immediately, covered by a hotter fire than ever. But in spite of the moonlight the odds were all with the Pathans. Four men could have held that flank of the ramp against a hundred unless there were some diversion.

So I had to be Diversion—Jack-in-the-box—Kismet—on the flank of the Pathans! There was no alternative, unless I wished to see King's Waziris hopelessly beaten off.

"Guard the prisoners!" I shouted to Narayan Singh; and, clubbing the rifle again, I scrambled out of the hole before fear, posing as discretion, should lay a restraining hand on me. It was then or never. In another minute any help would be too late.

So I charged into the moonlight, at the risk of being hit by the Waziri bullets, and the first the Pathans knew of my coming was when the butt of the rifle smacked like a pole-ax on the nearest man's head and he toppled over-side, leaving room for my swing at the next, and the next.

And of that, I remember not much. It was battle-ax work, and my strength was what counted. Four or five of them charged me, and I stepped back where an overhanging buttress of the cliff made shadow, dodging as they slashed at me, and bringing down the butt with all the force I knew.

They told me afterwards Mohammed's Tooth preserved me. Maybe! Something did. I was untouched!

Some one found the path that Grim, Narayan Singh and I had climbed by. King's second storming party reached the ramp by that route and came charging down on us. Then King and no other, with a shield made of wood in his hand to turn the defender's stones aside, and his feet on a Waziri's shoulder, gained the top and his party came scrambling after him. The Pathans took to flight, to add themselves to the chaos where the loads were. Lying, standing, kneeling, the Waziris fired savagely into that mess, sweeping the ramp

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and the rocks, and completing the stampede, if yells meant anything.

King and I had tried to stop them; he because ammunition now was desperately short; I because Narayan Singh was down there in the dark, with a prisoner who might mean more to us than a hundred men when it should come to daylight and a showdown. The priceless, irrecoverable bullets were squandered for many minutes.

"Where's the girl?" King demanded, when he got a chance to pay attention to me.

I told him I didn't know. He said nothing—pointedly. He displayed no interest when I told him we had Kangra Khan with his hands tied. He went on mastering his men, getting them posted to repel a possible return assault, singling out the wounded, sending them up to the cavern. There were nearly a score of wounded, several with scant chance of recovery. When I stepped up to speak to him he turned his back.

Well: there was no sense in arguing. He was right. Joan Angela was missing, and I alone to blame. It was I, who had had the opportunity to snatch her away from her guards—I who missed it. It was up to me to find her, and I turned and went, straight down the ramp again.

Two-thirds of the way down I met Narayan Singh leading Kangra Khan, who was coming quietly enough, aware that the Sikh's long saber would stop mid-way the first shout he might attempt. I stopped them, and pushed them both back into the dark behind a boulder out of reach of stray shots.

"Now," I said to Kangra Khan, "tell me where the *sahiba* is, and as soon as I've found her I'll let you go free."

He shook his head.

"*Huzoor*, I do not know!" he answered.

"Is she down there among your men?"

"As Allah is my witness, she did not pass me. I have not seen her since I left her well guarded near the cavern. She is slain no doubt."

He looked nearly as despondent as I felt, for from his point of view Joan Angela's death meant the loss of an enormous ransom. But Narayan Singh was unconvinced.

"I say, kill him, *sahib!*" he broke in. "If she is dead, he slew her! Kill him, and then you and I together will search for her body below there."

But I felt fairly well convinced that Kangra Khan was telling truth; and never yet having murdered a prisoner I felt no disposition to begin.

"Take him to the cavern," I said. "I'm going down alone."

Narayan Singh objected strenuously. He begged me to come with him to the cavern, arguing that Kangra Khan might otherwise escape—a manifest absurdity. He said if I would consent to that, he would return with me and protect me while I searched for the *sahiba's* body.

"For thou and I have campaigned together often. Thy honor and mine are one!" he argued.

At last I consented to stay where I was while he led Kangra Khan to the cavern and returned to join me in the search. It did not amuse me to meet King again without Joan Angela dead or alive. My mental processes are no man's business but my own, and King's opinion of me, though I value it, was not the issue. I am the man who must live with myself.

I waited an interminable time, listening to the scattered shots of some of King's Waziris, who were peppering the enemy's retreat and making it as difficult as possible to get away with the remaining baggage. Every minute seemed priceless, yet the Sikh did not come. I decided to go down alone, and had started, when I heard him come hurrying behind me. I put on speed then. To wait would only lose more time. He started to run, crying—

"*Sahib! sahib!*"

So I ran too, knowing he could overtake me, I had nearly reached the bottom, and was by the rock where Kangra Khan had stood, when he laid a hand on my shoulder from behind.

"Come, *sahib!*" he said, and turned, and started running, on his way back up the ramp.

Seeing I did not follow at once, he turned and shouted:

"Come, *sahib!* Quickly! King sahib's request!"

"What has happened?" I demanded; but the wind blew the words back in my face, and if he heard me he did not answer.

He stood there beckoning in the moonlight within easy range of the Pathans, and I suspected by his gestures he was grinning. It looked very much like a trick of his to prevent me from taking a long chance

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among the rocks. There are always plenty of friends to dissuade a fellow from the proper course. I turned my back on him, and started forward.

In a second he was in pursuit of me again, jumping and sliding down the ramp in a little avalanche of loose stones.

"Come!" he insisted. "King sahib sends for you!"

And before I could ask for an explanation he was gone again, scrambling up the slide on hands and knees. Far up above me I could see King standing in the moonlight on the ledge before the cavern, talking to about a dozen men, of whom one looked like Kangra Khan, our prisoner. There seemed nothing in the way of excitement going on up there. But Narayan Singh beckoned and shouted:

"Come swiftly! King sahib waits!"

I stepped out into the moonlight from the shadow of the rock, and climbed up on another rock to get a view of the surroundings. I was not up there a second before King caught sight of me—blew his whistle—and began beckoning violently.

I jumped down into the shadow, still intending to go forward, but saw King himself and half a dozen men come hurrying down the ramp, and that decided me to wait and hear what they might have to say. I crawled back to the bottom of the slide and stood there in total darkness—perfectly invisible; but I could see all the ramp and the men who came down it.

Half-way down the ramp King stopped and blew his whistle. Narayan Singh stood up and waved his arms again, yelling, "Sahib! Sahib!"

I could not pretend after that, nor could King pretend, that I had turned back of my own free will. I was satisfied to go and discover what King had to say before continuing the search, at all events.

But the moment I stepped into moonlight, and he saw me coming, King started back, beckoning to me once and taking it for granted I would follow him. He never once looked back to see whether I was coming. Neither did Narayan Singh wait, but scrambled to overtake King. So I climbed up the ramp all alone, in no hurry, disgusted at the turn of events, and sore with King, whom I suspected of having cold feet after as good as ordering me out on a forlorn hope.

But it was all very matter-of-fact up there. Nobody seemed disturbed, or to expect an attack before morning. They were loafing about, cleaning rifles, and I saw smoke issuing from the cavern-mouth, and two Waziris climbed over the edge of the ramp with water slopping out of half-filled kerosene cans. If they dared use the well in the ravine it meant that the Pathans had drawn off further than I thought. That was not reassuring. It might mean that King had definite news that Joan Angela was already miles away.

I came up with him at last, feeling pretty well exhausted, for a good deal of the heavy work that night had fallen to my share, and my head had not properly recovered from that blow I received the first night.

"What's the news?" I demanded.

"We're safe for tonight," he said simply, reaching out his hand for my blood-stained rifle.

He examined it casually and tossed it over the cliff.

"Why not go in and rest?" he asked, nodding his head in the direction of the cavern.

Not answering I stuck my hands into my pockets and accepted his advice.

There was a good fire in there. They had gathered what fuel the Pathans had left scattered about, and a brilliant flame was lighting up a great hole in the cliff that would have held a thousand men. Some wounded Waziris were sitting and sprawling around the fire, and toward the rear there were two people bandaging the rest, who were sitting with their backs against the wall, waiting their turn. One of the two was Grim. He turned his head as I passed the fire, and nodded a curt greeting.

"I saw Joan Angela," I said, "but they carried her off almost under my eyes. It was my fault. Can I help here?"

"Sure! Lend a hand," said a voice that made me nearly jump out of my skin; and Joan Angela looked up from tearing turbans into bandages to laugh at me. "It was Jim here who carried me off. Come over here and get busy!"

CHAPTER X

"We will take you at your word."

MEN differ, as the pigs that perish, and all of us are brutes to some extent. We have a lower nature that obstructs the

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higher and persists in spite of all our boasted civilization.

Joan Angela, whose nature compared to mine is as a diamond to a hunk of coal, was her normal, natural, brave self again, no longer enjoying adventure but making her absolute best of it; and I think she had utterly forgotten that incident down in the well. She looked at me, and spoke to me as to an old friend; and if she had never been more than an acquaintance, that might have passed muster.

But the —— of it was that she and I had been old friends. I value friendship more than anything on earth. It rankled in me—it had made of me that night a Berserker—that she should have dared think I would take advantage of her in any sort of circumstances. I did not asnwer her when she spoke. Her mere proximity filled me with a burning rage. For a minute or two I held a Waziri while Grim pushed his finger into a wound to feel for splintered bone; and when that job was done I turned my back on both Grim and her, and walked out. There was not the least excuse for it. I did it.

Outside, I met King, come from posting his watchmen.

"Where's Akbar bin Mahommed?" I asked, chiefly for something to say.

"Gone over to the enemy!" he answered. "By the way, he has your pistol—snatched it, I suppose, while the fighting was on."

I remembered then that Akbar bin Mohommed had passed me during the first rush down the ramp. But I found it hard to reconcile desertion with his earlier faithfulness, and said so.

"You're right," King answered, "he's no deserter. He's after that Tooth, and Grim sent him to earn it. He's a spy for us. He'll let us know before morning what the enemy intend."

He was looking at me curiously where the firelight streamed on both our faces.

"Why don't you go and lie down?" he said presently. "You need a rest."

He said nothing of rest for himself, and I laughed at him. I told him it was his turn. I said I would stay there on the ledge and keep watch, while he turned in by the fire; and I think it was more to humor me than for any other reason that he went in, and left me standing there. I bore a grudge against him too, because of his curtness when he came on me alive without Joan Angela. The mere fact that he had been justified meant as much to me just then as that Joan Angela had been unjustified. I would have quarreled with my own mother just then.

Narayan Singh came and sat down in the shadow of the cliff beside me. I resented it. He had had no right to play that trick on me, calling me back up the ramp without explanation, thus causing me to burst in like a fool on Joan Angela. I said nothing, savagely, for several minutes, but he undoubtedly divined my mood.

"Where's your prisoner?" I asked at last, compressing into one short sentence all the discourtesy I could command.

"At the back of the cavern, *sahib*. He is well-guarded," he answered.

Then, after a pause, during which I tried to think of some suitable rebuke:

"Our Guru saith: 'To fight for the oppressed is excellent; but let not wrath consume the spirit that has led thee.'"

I told him to go to —— with his preaching, and he got up and walked away, too wise to argue.

There I sat hour after hour, watching the moon change the shadows down in the ravine, listening to jackals and the lowering voice of the wind, that whined as if all the Pathan wounded were crying for help. But there were no discoverable wounded down there. Our Waziri women had pounced on quite a number of them before King could prevent, and their own women had found and carried off the rest.

Narayan Singh strode past me once or twice on a sentry-go of his own election. The third time, he stopped as if to speak, but thought better of it and passed along. Five minutes later he saluted, military style.

"*Sahib*," he said, "sleep! For I need sleep. And sleep I will not until you have slept first!"

That was the thin end of the wedge that entered my abominable mood and forced me back to a reasonable frame of mind. I began to argue with him, but made no headway, he assuring me that a Sikh can go without sleep for twice as long as a white man with less than half the ill effect. He was adamant—as gentle and firm and respectful as a well-trained nurse; and wise in the bargain.

"You are stronger than I. We may all need your strength before morning. You

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should sleep first, for that if no other reason," he insisted.

So I yielded, and lay down where I was. I suppose it was he who threw a sheepskin over me, but I was fast asleep before that happened—so deep in slumber that I never heard a sound of Akbar bin Mahommed's coming. It was Grim, about an hour before dawn, who shook me awake.

"Conference!" he said. "You're wanted. Give me Mohammed's Tooth."

So I gave him the old tooth in its crumpled scrap of paper, and followed him into the cavern, where Joan Angela, King, Narayan Singh, and Akbar bin Mahommed were already seated around the dying embers of the fire. Akbar looked mighty well pleased with himself, as if he had brought good news. I sat down between him and Narayan Singh, sideways to Joan Angela, so as not to have to look directly at her; and Grim took his seat facing me.

King wasted no time on preliminaries. He called for Kangra Khan, who came from a dark corner of the cavern followed by four Waziris and, at King's invitation, sat down beside him, watched intently by the guards. Then King spoke up, dealing only with essentials, as his way is:

"Akbar bin Mahommed got in touch with Kangra Khan's men, who have bivouacked an hour's march away at the north end of the ravine. They expect the Orakazi Pathans, for whom we were luckily mistaken, to join them soon after dawn. After that, they expect to return and attack us. They believe we must be short of ammunition. They count on cutting us off from water. They are sure we have very little food. They say our only way of escape is down into the ravine, where they can cut us up at leaisure. On the whole, they're about right.

"However, Akbar bin Mahommed is a diplomatist. It seems that our Hajji Jimgrim promised him Mohammed's Tooth, and he sees the way, when he possesses that, to make himself a man of great influence. He has told the Pathans about the Tooth; so their purpose now is to capture the Hajji and Miss Leich alive if possible, and to kill all of the rest of us. But they are anxious about Kangra Khan, too. They're afraid we might kill him. They feel their honor is entailed in saving his life if possible. But most of all they want the Tooth. They believe its possession will make them prosperous and powerful, besides protecting them from other tribes on their way home.

"Akbar bin Mahommed now makes this offer: If we will give him the Tooth, he will be responsible for leading the Pathans away and letting us and the Waziris escape unattacked to the border. We are here to discuss the proposal."

"The shameless dog would be a chief in my place!" Kangra Khan growled, glaring at Akbar bin Mahommed, who met the gaze without flinching. "Promises are wind that any rogue may belch forth! Give me the Tooth, and I will take that promise on myself. Aye, I will fulfil it!"

King's eyes met Grim's and mine and Narayan Singh's in turn. We all shook our heads. It was Grim who made the next proposal, speaking Arabic, which neither Kangra Khan, Akbar bin Mahommed nor Joan Angela understood.

"Suppose I take the Tooth and go with Akbar bin Mahommed. Then if he keeps his word, and you reach the border safely, I'll give him the Tooth, and you can exchange Kangra Khan against me."

But we voted that down instantly. Hajjis are respected in the Hills, but murder is sport and art, and a murderer would argue that possession of the Prophet's Tooth would cleanse all sin from his soul. They would kill Grim and then, with the Tooth by way of absolution, would attack, and wipe us out.

It looked like an *impasse*. There seemed no solution either way. We might have trusted Kangra Khan, perhaps; but Grim had promised the Tooth to Akbar bin Mahommed, and we were not a treaty-making government to cancel promises at our own convenience.

Akbar bin Mahommed, suspicious of the Arabic, began to doubt our good faith.

"What manner of men are ye, to make a bargain with me and then break it?" he demanded in Pushtu; and at that comprehension dawned on Kangra Khan.

"Oho!" he exclaimed. "By Allah! That way blows the wind! Ye have bargained to give the Prophet's Tooth to this worrier of dung-heaps? Give it to him, if he is fit for it, but let him prove his fitness first! Let him fight me—here—now—for the chieftainship! Clear a space and give us weapons!"

At that, Akbar bin Mahommed drew my pistol. I knocked it from his hand, but

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only in the nick of time. The blow nearly broke his wrist.

"Allah reward thee, Ram-is-den!" said Kangra Khan graciously.

But Akbar bin Mahommed hugged his wrist, and eyed me from another aspect.

"That man is a liar and a traitor!" Kangra Khan said, pointing his finger at Akbar bin Mahommed. "I am a man of my word, and ye know it! Lo, give him the Tooth, and send him forth with me. Ye and the Waziris shall go safe to the border. Allah is my witness."

That was a handsome enough offer. Of all the long chances we might choose from, the prospect that Kangra Khan might literally keep his word contained the least improbability. But Akbar bin Mohammed had risked his life in our behalf more than once, and we would have been curs if we had accepted the proposal as it stood.

Joan Angela piped up, sitting with her arms around her knees, and staring with great tired eyes across the embers at Kangra Khan.

"I think Kangra Khan is a man," she said. "I believe he would keep a promise."

Kangra Khan bowed his head ever so slightly in acknowledgment. He was not too pleased to be championed by a woman; yet his situation was nearly as desperate as ours, and he welcomed any hint of an approaching solution. He eyed Joan Angela intently as she continued:

"Why not ask him to promise to do his best to find a way out of this difficulty, and then let him go? He'd be an ingrate if he failed us, and I don't think he has that in him."

There was silence. It was a daring suggestion, but it rang true. If we let him go, and he deceived us, gone was our only hostage. He and his men could get possession of the Tooth by cutting us off from food and water and attacking in their own good time. Yet, if he were a man of his word——

"By Allah!" he broke in, "the woman has the right of it! Keep ye your promise, and lo, I keep mine! Give ye the Tooth to Akbar bin Mahommed. Let me go. I promise ye shall reach the border unmolested—ye and the Waziri!"

There was a fly in that amber somewhere. Akbar bin Mahommed detected it instantly.

"That is for them. As for me?" he asked pointedly.

"Dog! Thou wilt have the blessed Prophet's Tooth, so who can harm thee?"

From a Hillman's view-point that was unanswerable. It placed us in the horrible dilemma of having to stand up for the tooth's authenticity or else, by admitting it would not protect Akbar bin Mahommed, to throw away our lone chance. We simply did not dare to drop a hint that the tooth's power was not miraculous, and Kangra Khan, continuing, rubbed that fact home.

"Hah! It has saved the *sahibs!* Hah! Were it not for the Tooth, would a handful of dogs of Waziris have beaten off me and my men? By the Prophet, whom may Allah bless, who art thou, thou dog! to have no faith in it?"

Time was precious. Dawn would bring about the meeting of Pathans and a view of the ramp and the cavern—our predicament and our small numbers. We had to agree on something swiftly.

"We will take you at your word," said King, and stood up, holding out his hand to Kangra Khan.

They shook hands across the dying embers of the fire, but Kangra Khan waited, and there was awkward silence for a moment, until King detected what the matter was. He went and picked up my pistol—which was really Grim's—that I had knocked out of Akbar bin Mahommed's hand, and offered it to Kangra Khan butt-first. The Pathan accepted it, but waited yet.

King looked about him. He could hardly take a knife from a Waziri, and Kangra Khan's own had vanished in the dark when we had captured him. But one of our fellows had died of his wounds at the back of the cavern; Grim went and looked for his tulwar, found it, and brought it back to King, who offered it to the Pathan hilt-first. It was a brute of a weapon, weighing twenty pounds at a guess, with a rather curved blade, and beautifully worked with silver wire to keep the hand from slipping. Kangra Khan seized the hilt, and King laid his hand on the blade.

"By the Name of Names, I swear!" said Kangra Khan.

Then he stuck the tulwar into his waistcloth, bowed to us all, turned on his heel, and swaggered out.

"He's our only chance," said King, not too enthusiastically.

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"Huh! Ye should have trusted me," said Akbar bin Mahommed, kicking at the embers.

Joan Angela crossed to my side of the fire. I backed away, but she followed. None heard us.

"I'm sorry, Jeff!" she said simply.

"So am I!" I answered.

"I was down in the well in the dark, and——"

"So was I," I said. "I went down because it never entered my head you'd doubt me. I won't repeat the mistake."

She said no more, but stared at me for several seconds with those great gray eyes of hers, then went and joined the others. I walked out on the ledge and watched the dawn come.

CHAPTER XI

"The point, sahib! The point!"

WE BREAKFASTED off goat, singed by Grim over resinous and smoky fire-brands, washed down with water tasting of frog-spawn or something similar that had a natural right to be in it. Then the fire went out, and the wind rose, and it was cold. We felt like shipwrecked mariners, and watched an aeroplane away over near the horizon, circling and circling without a chance of seeing us, nor any prospect of our being helped in time, even if we were seen. For the Pathans were on their way toward us from the other direction, taking their time about it, keeping cover, well aware, too, of that "fowl-that-laid-eggs-on-the-wing."

Their scouts were in a screen below us very soon after dawn, but the sun was well up over the hills before the main body arrived. They had been reenforced by the Orakzai contingent, and for lack of anything better to do I counted upwards of three hundred of them. They took cover just out of practical rifle-shot, with their left flank on the well—our only source of water, of which we had stored two kerosene cans and eight or nine earthenware crocks full—about enough to last until next day, unless we should have to wash wounded.

Our Waziris were in the depths of despair. About half of them wanted to bolt, and the other half were in favor of opening fire with their remaining ammunition and then charging down to die.

"For let us die like men and please the Prophet—not as cattle in the byres in famine time!"

We did not dare to encourage them with lies about the Tooth. That course would have made them fanatical. They would then have charged ten times the number with hardly a moment's hesitation. King kept them quiet by telling them he had a ruse in store, appealing to their sense of cunning, never far below the surface.

It was after nine o'clock when some one waved a white cloth from a rock in the ravine, and we answered it. They waited for us for half an hour to go down to them, but we were not such fools as that; so at last Kangra Khan, with eight bearded giants at his back, came climbing up the ramp and halted in front of us, where we sat in line in the midst of the cavern-mouth. Our Waziris, some in the cavern, and some outside, hung around on the alert, as nervous as a pack of wolves. Akbar bin Mahommed stood behind us, showing his teeth in a grin mixed of apprehension and bravado.

"By Allah, I have come!" said Kangra Khan.

"Why not? Did you not promise?" answered King.

"Aye. I keep my promises. Ye go free. But ye must leave the rifles. I have promised those to my men. And as for the Prophet's Tooth, that man—" he pointed to Akbar bin Mahommed—"must fight me for it!"

"That was not in the bargain," said King.

"Nay, there was nothing in the bargain said about it. Neither yes, nor no. Therefore he must fight me for the Tooth, since I say so."

"I have not yet given him the Tooth," said Grim.

"What odds?" said Kangra Khan. "Give it to him now. He shall come down there—" he made a sweeping gesture in the general direction of the ravine—"and fight me—he who would be chief in my place! Then, if he wins, let him make himself chief! He shall have fair play. When the fight is over, ye shall all go free."

It was all obviously prearranged. The eight stalwarts who stood back of him were grinning in the way men do who know they have you in a trap.

"You can't allow that!" said Joan Angela nervously. "Jeff! You can't allow Akbar to be killed on our account."

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She spoke to me because she knew me best; but in my mean mood she seemed to be singling me out as the one who most needed instruction in ethics. It added fuel to the anger that still smouldered in me. Akbar bin Mahommed blew on it.

"How can I fight?" he demanded. "Ram-is-den injured my wrist!"

"I have promised my people there shall be a fight," said Kangra Khan. "So fight there must be!"

He did not frame the inference in words, but his gesture as he jerked his head toward the men below, and the truculent manner of the chieftains he had brought with him, left little to the imagination. There would be a fight or a wholesale slaughter, and we might suit ourselves. So I stood up. I did not consult the others, and I was careful to turn my back on Joan Angela.

"It's true I hurt Akbar bin Mahommed," I said. "Fight me instead!"

"Nay, fight me!" said Narayan Singh, and leaped to his feet beside me.

"Don't, Jeff! Do sit down!" implored Joan Angela; and she could not have said anything to make me more determined.

"Leave this to me, *sahib!*" urged Narayan Singh; but I gripped him by the arm and swung him back behind me.

"Is it for the Tooth?" asked Kangra Khan, in Pushtu; so I answered in the same tongue.

"Yes," I said, "since I'm fighting for Akbar bin Mahommed. Let the terms be stated, though. You name them."

The men at his back were delighted. They grinned like a row of devils, and it was clear enough my challenge would have to be accepted or Kangra Khan would lose *izzat*. And his *izzat* means to a Pathan of breeding more than his religion. King and Grim sat saying nothing. There was nothing they could say, that would have been the slightest use.

"These be the terms," said Kangra Khan. "If I slay thee, I take the Tooth. Slay me, and keep it." Then he added in English, so that his own men might not understand. "It is a lie about the Tooth, but it will serve, and I can use it. That man"—he nodded at Grim—"may be a Hajji, but——"

He did not finish the sentence. It was Grim who jumped into that breach. He spoke English too.

"Keep faith!" he warned. "Win the Tooth, and when we reach the border safely, I will procure a writing to prove that the Tooth is authentic. But if you lose it, and do not keep faith, I will admit I am a fraud and you a fool. Your men will kill me then; but not until then, because I am a Hajji. They will laugh you to scorn."

Kangra Khan nodded. It was perfectly easy to guess what was passing in his mind. He wanted the title of Ghazi—slayer of an infidel—which would make him the unchallengeable leader of perhaps a dozen villages; and the Tooth, if he could keep up the fable about it, would make him a match for the *mullahs*, who are thorns in the sides of chieftains.

"I have sworn in the Name of Names to keep faith," he said simply. "Moreover, I have a bone to pick with Ram-is-den, who took me by surprize and thinks he is as strong as I am! So let us fight."

King and Grim had altogether too much faith in my prowess. They regarded it as a foregone conclusion that I could beat the Pathan, for they had both seen me in action. On more than one occasion it had been my physical strength and skill with old-fashioned weapons that had pulled Grim out of a tight place, and in all our adventures it had always been understood that each should contribute his utmost at any moment. The account was much better than square. Grim's brains had saved me scores of times; and King had saved us all by making friends of the Waziris. But Joan Angela took another point of view.

"Jeff, I won't have you take this risk on my account!" she said.

She looked miserable and indignant. I did not even answer her.

"Where shall the fight be? And what weapons?" I asked.

"Below there, in front of all my men," he answered with a jerk of the head toward the ravine. "I fight with this tulwar."

And he drew from his sash the weapon King had given him when we set him free.

"My *sahib* fights with this!" said Narayan Singh, seizing his long saber midway down the scabbard and holding it on a level with his eyes. Whereat all nine Pathans grinned hugely; as a weapon they considered it contemptible.

Kangra Khan saluted me with an air of mock-respect, and turned on his heel to swagger away with his chieftains.

"I will wait for you below. No hurry.

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By Allah, Ram-is-den, death waits for one of us, and I feel foreknowledge of long life in me!"

King became busy at once with our Waziri, for they crowded him, asking for explanations, and he had to instruct them very carefully. An ill-considered move on their part, or a mistake at the peak of excitement, was likely to upset everything and bring on massacre; for Kangra Khan's authority was none too absolute. Grim reenforced him, and the two had their hands full, the Waziris bitterly resenting the proposed surrender of their rifles. They swore they would rather die where they were, fighting. There was mutiny, until King promised them a brand-new rifle apiece when they should come to British territory.

Meanwhile, Joan Angela clung to my arm; and, boor though I had been to her, I was not brute enough to throw her off. She begged and implored me not to fight. There were no tears in her eyes, and she did not sob or act hysterically, but she said she would much rather go down below there and be killed than to have me killed on her account, while she looked on.

"Don't look, then!" I advised her.

"Jeff," she said, "you're still nursing that grudge against me! I've admitted I was wrong. I've begged your pardon. I know you're a man who would never take advantage of a woman in a situation like that. I was alone, in the dark, in a well, and my nerves were on end—can't you—won't you understand that?"

I did understand it perfectly. But I did not answer.

"Don't you love me, Jeff?" she asked.

That question from Joan Angela was more surprizing than if all those mountains had suddenly been swept away. I turned at last, and met her eyes—the same, good, friendly gray eyes they had always been, as true and honest as the year is long.

"We all love you," I answered.

"Jeff, I want you to marry me. You're not to go down there and be killed. You're to live, and marry me. There's some other way out of this. There must be!"

"That's kind, Joan," I answered. "You make me very sorry I was so —— rude. But the sacrifice is much too great, and I'm not worth it. I'd be still less worth it if I accepted it. Besides, I have passed my word to fight the man."

"Jeff, I mean it! You asked me once, and I refused. Now I ask you."

"To keep me from fighting!" I said, trying hard to grin at her.

It takes more manhood than I have, to appear unaffected by Joan's arm on my shoulder, and her lips and eyes as near as need be.

"I mean it, Jeff!"

"Dear girl," I said, "I'm grateful for the honor, but I don't believe you."

"Jeff, I'm telling you the truth!"

"Joan," I said, "you tell that to the Horse Marines. Or tell it again to me when this fight's over."

"All right!" she said, suddenly releasing me and stepping back. "Get into the fight, then, and win! Have you forgiven me?"

Words would have been a lame reply to that. I deliberately strode two paces up to her and kissed her twice—the first time I had ever done that and, I don't mind betting, the last. Some day I expect to meet the man who has the right to kiss her; and I'll envy him.

I had forgotten Narayan Singh. Those were all-absorbing moments. He stepped forward grinning, with the saber in both hands, hilt toward me.

"Now the *sahib* will fight like the warriors of old!" he said. "Observe: This saber is a good one. But beware how you take the full weight of that tulwar on the guard. In distance you have the advantage. At close quarters weight and cutting edge are in his favor. Bear that in mind, *sahib!*"

He knew my shortcomings. He and I have practised sword-play by the hour together, and though I can beat him to his knees by sheer strength when I get close enough, he usually ends an afternoon by pinking me neatly pretty nearly where he will.

"Now it is no matter of laughter over a dozen bruises," he warned me. "Tulwars cut deep. He will count on the edge. Use thou the point."

Well, it was no use waiting. I looked to my shoes, which were worn by the rough work on the rocks. Narayan Singh cut frayed leather away and re-tied the laces firmly, cutting off the ends, for more fights than a few have been lost by clumsy footwork.

I took the saber, leaving the scabbard with Narayan Singh, and led the way down the ramp. The others followed, except

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King, who stayed with the Waziris to prevent them from approaching too close to the Pathans. By the time we reached the foot of the ramp most of our wounded were perched in a row like vultures on the ledge, and King and the rest of the Waziris had descended by the short cut, to squat like fans in the bleachers along a ledge low down.

The battle-ground was chosen already. Kangra Khan stood waiting there, swinging his heavy tulwar, with the black breast-hair showing through a gap in his cotton shirt. He grinned at sight of me, and the Pathans in groups on every near-by rock, set up their battle-cry, "*Allaho Akbar!*" until the hills echoed it. King kept our Waziris silent somehow, and receiving no defiant answer the Pathans grew still.

They had picked out the only nearly level spot available—a sheet of smooth rock, crossed by a couple of layers like steps a few inches high. The rock was rather slippery, and sloped upward toward his end. Moreover, he had the sun behind him. But you can't expect a Pathan to understand the niceties of fair play.

Joan Angela, pale as a ghost, took her seat on a rock between Grim and Narayan Singh, with her arms around her knees. She had used the white *uleema's* turban to make bandages for the wounded, and her hair was all down over her shoulders, making her look younger, but forlorn—you might say shipwrecked. I threw off my sheepskin jacket and gave it to her to hold, but she put it on over her shoulders, for the wind was blowing hard and laden with bitterness from far-off ledges where snow never thawed. She did not speak. Grim laughed, for his own encouragement and mine.

"Rammy, old top," he said, "be quick for the Lord's sake. We want to go home!"

I made some sort of lame joke in reply, and noticed Akbar bin Mahommed picking his way leisurely toward us over the rocks; he waved his hand, not exactly reassuringly. Then I strode out to meet Kangra Khan.

HE BEGAN at once to show his swordsmanship, no doubt to scare me. He could whirl that heavy tulwar so fast that it was invisible and sang like a dynamo. He could change hands while he did it, never checking speed, bending his body the while in all sorts of supple curves. His men set the ravine echoing again with their approval, and there were cat-calls directed at me, along with prayers to Allah to assist their chief.

But I have always thought that sort of display is rather unwise, for it gives your opponent a line on your strength and your weakness and applause leads to excitement, which saps swordsmanship. A swordman should be an enigma. I could see he was puzzled because I did not complain about the sun in my eyes, or make any fuss, but stood on guard in silence, waiting for him. The only sound from my side was the voice of Narayan Singh:

"Keep the hand low, *sahib!* Let the blows glance! Point!"

Then Kangra Khan came on like a whirling dervish, swinging at me as if my head were meat on a butcher's block. I sidestepped him, and he had to check his swing midway to guard my lunge, that even so laid one of his rib-bones open. The speed of his rush took him past me, and now the advantage of the sun was mine.

"*Bohut atcha!*" cried Narayan Singh. "The hand lower, *sahib!* Wait for him!"

I did not have to wait long. The Pathan was stung, and furious. He had to show his men the hurt was nothing and his spirit none the worse for it. He came on with a sort of hop, like a shot-putter's, one leg advanced, whirling the tulwar slowly; and his shift as he came within reach of my point was like lightning.

"Watch low!" cried Narayan Singh, and a swipe at my legs glanced off the saber that would have shorn them both through, had they been there.

His recovery was marvelous, and my point missed his shoulder by a foot. Then I went for him, driving him backward along the rock with blow after blow that brought sparks from his tulwar, while Narayan Singh cried:

"Steady, *sahib!* Steady!"

It was foolish. I was playing the Pathan's own game. He ducked and swerved suddenly, gave me the sun in my eyes again, and I felt blood flowing from my neck.

"The point, *sahib!* The point!" yelled Narayan Singh.

It was easier said than done, for we were breath to breath, and the tulwar blows were aimed like hail. But I knocked the tulwar up at last, and gave him the hilt in

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his teeth, which sent him reeling on his heels and brought my point in play. However, he still had the sun in his favor.

"You're not hurt!" yelled Grim. "That cut's nothing."

But I could tell by the tribesmen's yelling that they thought otherwise; and Kangra Khan's grin was not wholly due to the blow I had landed on his mouth. He spat out a tooth and came on again.

But now I took warning and stuck to the point, he swiping and dodging in efforts to reach me, yet giving ground foot after foot as I lunged, with Narayan Singh's voice in my ear:

"Hand low, *sahib!* Slower recover!"

Then I used an old trick, and he fell for it. After a lunge that forced him to give ground I left my right leg well advanced, and he swung for it with all his might, while his men sent up a yell that pierced the sky. But the leg was not there when he struck, and the force of his blow made swift recovery impossible. I used the edge then, laying his shoulder open handsomely. He barely saved his life by clever footwork and a back-handed upward blow with the tulwar that was as clever as anything I have ever seen.

I had the sun of him again, and took full advantage of it, raining blow after blow on him that kept him on his heels. Then he set one foot wrong on the ledge that crossed the rock, and threw himself flat on his back rather than be run through. In silence, in which you could have heard a pin drop, I set my point at his throat and stood over him. He did not cry for quarter, but lay glaring up at me with eyes that I pitied. I have seen a hunted animal look that way.

"Good, Jeff! Very good!" I heard Joan Angela.

But it was not so good. There were the tribesmen to consider, and none but Kangra Khan to hold them to their word. That look in his eyes was a savage's. He was ashamed to be beaten so easily. Hate, and his notions of honor, our helplessness and the obvious fact that a cry from him would bring the tribesmen down on us to end the whole affair in the shortest, simplest way, were among the odds I had to reckon.

I stepped back, raising my point, and signed to him to rise, returning to my own end. I even gave him his own ground with his back to the sun, saluting him as he retired to have his wound attended. He answered the salute, and it had an excellent effect on the tribesmen; they did not applaud, but they murmured, and I could actually feel the change of attitude toward myself, as if it were a concrete thing that stirred the atmosphere. It began to look as if another round or two might win their friendship.

However, Grim, who came to my corner with Narayan Singh to staunch the blood flowing from my neck, brought bad news—worst imaginable.

"The Tooth's gone!" he said. "Akbar bin Mahommed stole it from the pocket in my sleeve! He has sneaked off to the hills. You've got to win now, Rammy, old top! If he sneaks round and shows that Tooth to the Pathans before you've licked your man, we're done for anyhow!"

There comes a time when the best of us succumb to nerves, and the mark of a good man then is the speed with which he regains self-command. I told Grim to sit down and think, for I had enough to keep me occupied.

Narayan Singh mopped up the blood on my neck and poured into my ear the abstract of a long experience.

"You should have slain him, *sahib!* Never mind. Slay him the next time. That cut you gave him is nothing much. Now he will be like a wolf at bay. Beware of him! He is cunning. He will seek to regain the admiration of his men! Stick to the point, *sahib!* Put the sun in his eyes, and keep him at a distance! The Gods are good, and seek to discredit Allah, but they are wise, and dislike foolishness! Use only the point, *sahib!* When you lunge, be swifter, and recover much more slowly, keeping your eye on his eye. Never mind that thing he wields; you have the better weapon. Watch his eyes! Now!"

A roar went up from the Pathans as Kangra Khan stepped out on the rock again. His shirt was a mess of blood, but there was lots of liveliness about him, and he swung the tulwar once or twice, by way of challenge, with all the old skill, making the blade *thrum.* I walked out to meet him, stood on guard, and waited. He crouched low, and waited too, inviting me to attack, but I did not accept the invitation.

Suddenly he rushed in, mowing like a scythe-man at my legs. He forced me to stoop to guard myself. As I crouched

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lower and lower, playing the waiting game, he watched his chance and letting my point pass through his shirt—it grazed his ribs—sprang for my neck and with a jerk of his left hand nearly threw me forward on my face. Before I could quite recover and turn he was down on me with the tulwar. I caught the blow on the guard and it snapped the saber blade clean off. I heard Joan Angela scream.

The Pathans began yelling and dancing, and I felt the sting as the tulwar-blade hit home, gashing me from hip to thigh. But I did not fall, and I did crash the hilt like a cestus into his teeth. He reeled backward, and I closed with him. We went to the rock together, he under me, and I rained blows on him with the hilt while he struggled to get his right arm free and cut my throat with the tulwar.

"Smash him, Jeff! Oh, smash him!" Grim yelled. "Crush his guts!"

"Get the tulwar, *sahib!*" roared Narayan Singh. "Throw that hilt away and get the tulwar!"

I let the hilt go, for that gave me two hands, and I felt my strength oozing through the wound. The sole chance left me was speed and sheer strength. I dazed him with blows to the head and then, failing to seize the tulwar, got a hold on his jaw and tried to break his neck. I got my thumb on his wind-pipe. Over and over we went. He broke the head-lock—nearly broke my grip on his right forearm, chopping me badly in a dozen places—then yelled in agony as I got both hands on his wrist and he had to let the tulwar go.

Then to get the tulwar! Slimy with each other's blood, we rolled and strained and fought to reach it, while the Pathans danced in circles around us, yelling themselves hoarse. We were both growing weak, I bleeding worse than he, which gave me a strange advantage: his hand slipped wherever he gripped me. To offset that he set his fingers into a cut in my arm, and the agony of that spurred me to a last prodigious effort. I knew it was my last. He had me beaten if I failed. I gripped him around the waist, pinning one arm, whirled him, staggering to my feet, and hurled him into the midst of his yelling men. Then the world seemed to slide out from under my feet; I sat down backwards, still more or less conscious, but weak, and without even will to recover.

WHAT followed was like the vivid details of a nightmare, in which I seemed to have no part except as the arena in which opposing arguments struggled for the mastery. I felt Narayan Singh's arms, and Joan Angela's, but nothing seemed to matter, even when King came, and I recognized his voice quite close to me. He was talking with Grim to windward—in low tones probably—but the wind carried both voices, and my hearing sense was all at sixes and sevens. Joan Angela's voice in my ear seemed a mile away, and her words were a jumble; King's and Grim's were perfectly distinct.

"He stole the Tooth."

"Who did?"

"The Waziri who killed Akbar bin Mahommed. Then three more Waziris fought him for it, and between them they lost it. It's gone. Are your fingers strong? Quick! Pull out one of my teeth!" That was King.

Then Grim:

"A green tooth won't do! Wait—I've got it! Stand in front of me!"

Then I heard, as distinctly as I now can hear the ticking of the clock on the wall above me, the crack as Grim broke up two hundred dollars' worth of U. S. dentistry.

"The biggest one!" said King. "Quick! They're coming! Give me the rest—I'll hide them."

Then a war of words, in which *izzat* and *shirm** predominated, along with excited argument about Waziri rifles. I know now what happened, but then it seemed no possiblen concern of mine.

Kangra Khan was too beaten and weak to control the Pathans, until King's experienced fingers bandaged him and chafed him back to full consciousness. There were men there who considered themsevles his formidable rivals for the chieftainship, who would have preferred to see him dead. But King helped him to the middle of the battle-rock, and Grim presented him with the Tooth, wrapped in a page of Perisan notes extracted from his memorandum book. After that it was only a question of whether Kangra Khan would keep his word; no Pathan dared disobey him, now that he had the Prophet's Tooth to curse or bless with.

Our Waziris refused point-blank to keep their part of the agreement, and therein lay the difficulty. They refused to surrender

*Dishonor.

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their rifles, offering rather to do battle, man for man, with the Pathans. The idea of single combat had taken hold, and challenge followed challenge. It was King and Grim, pouring wise words into Kangra Khan's ears, who managed the business finally. Our Waziris were allowed to take their rifles with them over the British border—where they were confiscated promptly by the authorities, for various and sundry reasons, including the good one that every single rifle was originally stolen.

And to their honor be it written that, though we had two score Waziris who could stand and march and bear a load, they were eight Pathans who carried me to the border in a litter made of poles and sheepskin. And they have sent a deputation since, to tell me I am free of all their country; although I don't intend to test that generous *laissez passer*.

Joan Angela came and nursed me in the hospital; and when my great heap of thews and bones turned atavistic and recalled the cave-man trick of recovery from what common sense would say was certain death, she renewed her offer, very gently and sincerely.

But my head, as well as my heart, was functioning by that time.

"God knows," I said, "I'll wear your offer in my hat until I die, and will try to live up to it. But I'm a middle-aged man of middle-class means. You're a young girl, with millions, and all your life in front of you. There's the right man somewhere. I won't wrong him—or you."

She said she was in earnest, and she was undoubtedly. But so was I, and I'm the man I have to live with. So we parted good friends. And if any of you ever chance to meet Joan Angela, and win her friendship, you may take it from me, you are fortunate; her friendship is stronger and longer, and has more grain in it than most have nowadays.

THE INDIAN JOAN OF ARC

by Josiah M. Ward

FEW, very few Indian women have broken the trammels of their sordid life and left a name to remember them by. Pocahontas was one; Sacajewa was another; Wi-ne-ma—Toby Riddle—the third. These three gained celebrity through their devotion to the whites. Intellectually, they were not above the mental status of an ordinary squaw. There was, however, one Indian woman, unknown beyond a limited circle of white men, who did possess marked intellectual qualities, a forceful personality and the daring and zeal of Joan of Arc. This woman lived in the first half of the nineteenth century. Her name was Bar-chee-am-pe, her title was Prophetess of the Absaroka—erroneously called Crow—Peoples. The whites knew her as "Pine Leaf," the heroine of the Crow Nation.

Pine Leaf was of an essentially masculine nature but not of a masculine mold. Her form was the perfection of feminine symmetry. She was an Indian but was marked by none of the physical characteristics of the women of her race, except by her black hair and eyes; nor had she their broad cheek bones and the dragging gait. As described by the traders and others who saw her in the flush of early womanhood, her features were regular and beautiful, her complexion a rich olive in color and the expression of her face, in repose, pensive and at times singularly melancholy. She was modest in speech and action, but in conflict with tribal foes she was a fury. For, like Joan of Arc, Pine Leaf was a warrior.

But that was only the beginning of her remarkable career. As a warrior she learned certain facts which imbued her with an ambition to preserve her people from the menace of an advancing antagonistic civilization. The better to accomplish this purpose she broke down the age-old prejudice against the admission of women to the council chamber and became one of the chief councilors.

Pine Leaf never married for the simple reason that a husband would hamper her life-work. In her lodge she utilized the services of women captives; women captives

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took care of her horses, and made her garments, kept her war-weapons bright and keen, and her shield-bearer, when she was on the war-path, was always a woman. She liked men well enough as fellow warriors but had no place for them in her intimate life.

Her choice of the career of a warrior was peculiar. At the age of fourteen, in or about the year 1825, her twin-brother was killed by Blackfeet in a raid upon a Crow village. Twins among Indians were not only of infrequent occurrence but were surrounded with an aureole of superstition. Each was believed to be one-half of a personality which, united, formed one person. The death of either from violence made the performance of some mighty vow obligatory on the survivor. The survivor who failed to obey the form and spirit of this creed could never in the life-to-come be united to his twin and each must forever remain a half-person.

Pine Leaf was an orphan and consulted no one in formulating her vow. She vowed to take her brother's place upon the war-path, and never to forsake it or marry until she had killed one hundred enemies of the Crows. Furthermore, she had the vow recorded by the head medicine man of her band.

At this period and for many years the Crows were constantly at war with the Blackfeet and Arickarees and intermittently with the Cheyennes, Utes and Sioux. Their territory was as large as the State of Indiana, their villages numerous, and the entire tribe, which was divided into bands, could put 16,000 warriors in the field. They were constantly sending out war-parties, and Pine Leaf began to go with them as soon as she was able to handle a spear, shield and battle-ax. At first her companions were disposed to treat her as a pet, and to favor her with opportunities to "count coups." Such proffered favors were haughtily—even angrily rejected. Acceptance would have constituted a violation of the spirit of her vow, which impelled her to plunge into every fight with the utmost daring. She was absolutely incapable of fear. The time came when her counsel while on the war-path was sought by the chief.

One of the many desperate Indian fights in which she participated was of her own planning. A formidable force of about one thousand Blackfeet penetrated Crow territory at a time when the greater number of Crow warriors were away on a foray. So confident were the invaders of a sweeping victory that they brought their women and children with them. Ten miles from the Crow village they captured and killed two Crow youths who were hunting stray horses, and there went into camp, intending to attack upon the following day.

It was a desperate situation for the Crows left in the home village. Only a master stroke could save them. A council of war was held, but no plan suggested that carried any hope of successful resistance. Gloom settled upon the council.

Pine Leaf had said nothing heretofore. Now she raised her voice.

"Oh Sparrow Hawks," said she, "why be down-cast when the Great Spirit puts foolish thoughts in the heads of our enemies and they sit down before us and bow their heads and ask us to cut off their scalp-locks?"

The warriors gazed at her in amazement and then turned their eyes upon each other.

"Bar-che-am-pe talks foolishly," they murmured, meaning that she was crazy.

"Open your eyes, Sparrow Hawks," she resumed. "The Blackfeet are so certain of victory that they have brought their women and their children to laugh at us when we run away. They have brought their lodges that they may take their ease with their wives. They do not come like warriors on the war-path. They come to mock us "

The Crow warriors broke forth in savage denunciation of the insolent enemy.

"They are foolish to think that the brave Sparrow Hawks will let them ride over us. Hear me. They have pitched their lodges in the shadow of a high hill upon which is a level space where a thousand warriors may crouch unseen and overlook their camp. We can ride our horses down the sloping sides of this hill and hurl ourselves upon them before they gather their spears and collect their bows and arrows. We must do this, warriors, at a time when they least expect us. Not at night when they will have guards out, not at day-break when they will look for us to attack and be ready, but in the morning, when they think we have vanished like snow before a Summer sun."

The Crows who had hung upon her words in breathless suspense burst out in clamor

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and yelled their resonant war cry. The strategy as planned by her was a complete success. Pine Leaf fought like a fiend incarnate, and incarnadined were her spear and battle-ax. Seven Blackfeet were slain by her alone and 172 were killed by other warriors. The Crows had twenty-nine wounded but none mortally. All the Blackfeet women and children were captured, besides the baggage and many horses.

Pine Leaf was now a proven warrior, and she modestly asked her chief to impart to her the war-path secret. He told her frankly that being a woman the secret could never be revealed to her.

"Have I not killed many in battle?" she asked.

"Yes, but——"

"Have I not followed where any warrior dared lead?" she persisted.

The chief squirmed and was silent.

"Why am I debarred just because I am a woman? Why am I sent away with the women and children when that secret is told the warriors of but one battle?"

She pressed the question so hard that at last the chief was compelled to refer the matter to his immediate band, which vociferously echoed her request and this secret, which was forbidden to women, was imparted to her.

Having broken down one closely guarded convention Pine Leaf now determined to make her way into the medicine lodge, admission to which was another exclusive prerogative of the men. Here, too, she met some opposition but was at last admitted to this inner circle, thus, for the first and only time in the history of the Crow nation, or any other Indian nation, placing a woman on an absolute level with the men of her race.

Results prove beyond a doubt this singular Indian woman had a motive far beyond mere curiosity in her determination to penetrate the arcana of male government. There was a flaw in their method; what was the flaw? She had never met any white men, but had heard much about them from those Crows who acted as middlemen in commercial transactions with the traders. Their accounts did not satisfy her. She wished to meet them and form conclusions based upon her own observation and their answers to her questions.

Her wish was to be granted sooner than expected. Word came to the village that Johnson Gardner, a trader whose fairness in dealing with the tribe had been rewarded by unusual privileges and promise of protection in Crow territory, was having trouble with a wandering band of Arickarees. They had stolen his horses and hovered about his camp, waiting for any opportunity or excuse to loot it. The Arickarees numbered four hundred warriors.

The Crows were enraged over this invasion of their territory and violence done to a trader who was known to be their friend. A punitive party of three hundred warriors set forth for Gardner's camp, with Pine Leaf as one of the sub-chiefs.

A runner met them with the information that the situation had grown more acute, the Arickarees having ambushed and killed three white trappers, who were on their way to the trader's camp, there to dispose of a quantity of pelts and obtain fresh supplies. The Arickarees were armed with guns, he told the Crows. This news was somewhat disconcerting to them, as they had not yet adopted this weapon for war or the hunt.

"We will take them from their dead hands," said Pine Leaf.

This sentiment was regarded with favor by all, Pine Leaf's "medicine" being esteemed good in any emergency.

Stopping not far from the camp but out of sight of the Arickarees, they rested their mounts before charging. The animals needed the respite for they had been hard ridden. While resting the *pop-pop* of guns in continued action warned them that Gardner was under fire of the Arickarees. The Crows set their horses on the run and had just reached a point from which they could survey the scene of battle when a terrific explosion which made the earth tremble nearly shook them off their startled horses. The Arickarees were stunned. A stray bullet had struck Gardner's gunpowder store and blown up the entire deposit.

Pine Leaf was first to apprehend the situation and dash down upon the Arickarees who had revived sufficiently from the shock to scramble to their horses with the intention of fleeing from that spot. But the Crows were amongst them with spear and battle-ax. Some of those whose guns were charged fired loosely at the Crows, and one of the bullets struck Pine Leaf's left arm just below the elbow, breaking the

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bone. Thrusting the broken arm into the bosom of her jacket, and enraged by pain, she plunged anew into the conflict, hewing down three of her foes before the fray ended in the flight of the surviving Arickarees.

"After them," she cried to her companions. "Get their guns."

She was faint from the loss of blood, and Gardner led her to his camp where there was a Dr. Walton, who set the arm but insisted upon her remaining in camp for three days until he felt assured that the wound would heal. Pine Leaf gladly assented; here were the men she wished to question about the great outside world.

Again Pine Leaf was fortunate. It would have been difficult to meet together, men better qualified to give her the information she craved than those who traveled with Gardner as his guests. Dr. Walton was a well-informed man on matters both of his profession and of general affairs. Dr. Harrison, son of "Tippecanoe" Harrison, was able to answer all questions concerning government affairs. And there was a Mr. Brotherton, who was a world traveler and noted big-game hunter.

From these men Pine Leaf gained, through an interpreter, an insight into the civilization before which, she concluded, the red man must vanish, or accept and live under conditions vastly different from their present mode of existence. Her mind grasped the situation, perhaps dimly but certainly with unusual intelligence, and she cast about for a solution of the difficulties her people must encounter. The answers to her questions convinced her, first of all, that the growing population of the United States—Dr. Harrison had informed her on this point—would force the whites in their march westward to settle upon the red man's land. How would invasion by this mighty force affect the Crow nation? What should be done to preserve her people and avoid a conflict? This was her problem.

She inquired about firewater, the stuff that stole away the Indians' brains and made them easy victims of traders' rapacity. She was told that there were as many kinds of whites as there were of reds, and that the winners of life's battles were those who abstained from excessive drinking of whisky.

"Then the traders sell it to the Indians so the red man will lose his brain, his property, and become poor," she said.

On returning to her village Pine Leaf, compared her tally of coups with the record in the medicine lodge. Both amounted to ninety-eight.

"I must take two more scalps," said she to herself, "to fulfill my vow. Then I will make a new vow—a vow to consecrate the remainder of my life solely to the safeguarding of my people."

Filled with high resolve she sat alone in her lodge, thinking. Her arm was still in a sling. As she was turning many things over in her mind word came that Cheyennes, on the war-path, had invaded Crow territory.

"My horse, my weapons!" she cried to her women, jumping up.

"No, no, no," they implored. "You cannot use your broken arm."

"I can wield the battle-ax with the right hand."

No argument could influence her to remain behind with the women and children. As ever she took the lead when they met the Cheyennes. She had gained two coups and was battling with a Cheyenne when she was shot by another Cheyenne.

It was supposed she was killed and four warriors rushed forward to carry her off the field and thus save her scalp. Every one of them was wounded, but they rescued her.

Pine Leaf was told that she could not recover—must die.

"Not yet," she told the sorrowing braves. "I have much to do. And I have fulfilled my vow to avenge my twin."

Nor did she die. But it was a long while before she could again ride forth on the war-path. Meanwhile her thoughts led her to these conclusions:

The Crows must firmly establish friendly relations with the whites and seal a compact by treaty with the United States.

They must have the free use of firearms for hunting and to repel the invasion of other Indians.

That no liquor be permitted in their territory by sale or gift.

That all captive women of other tribes be taken as wives and treated as Crow women, so that the nation might increase the number of its warriors.

All these conclusions Pine Leaf made realities and her power over the Crows was signalized by her election to the office of Prophetess. Nor have the Crows departed to this day from her teaching.

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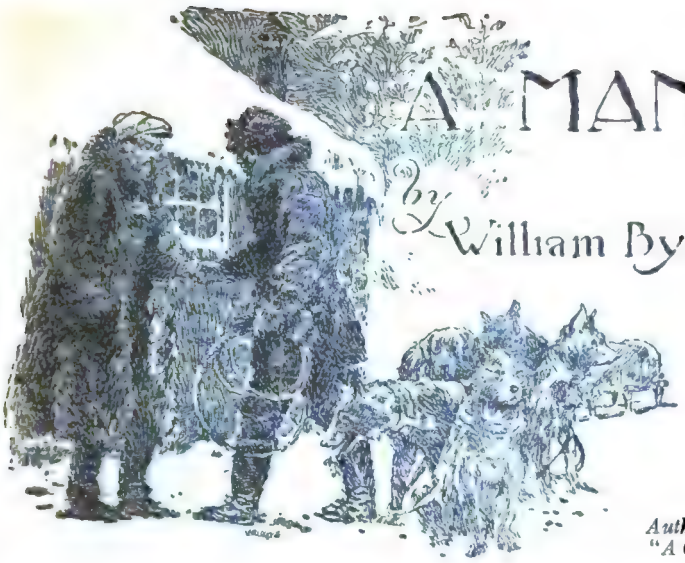

A MAN'S LINE

by William Byron Mowery

Author of "The Seventh Man," "A Cain of the Uplands," etc.

"DO THOSE animals bite?"

The big weather-bronzed livyere to whom the question was addressed grinned. He had heard that question from every traveler that ever came ashore in the Labrador tickle. They all seemed to think that the big snarling huskies were man-eaters.

"They do," the livyere returned, "but they jest et two Nascaupee Injuns a few minutes ago, an' they ain't hungry any more."

"My word!" the newcomer ejaculated, shying away from the huskies and getting close to the three livyere trappers. They were leaning against a fish stage, watching the little steamer in the cove throw out ice-grapnels.

The genuine fright of the individual who had just come across the ice from the ship, made the tall livyere snap his braided whip at his huskies to keep them back.

The newcomer was a small slender man of forty, with the pallor of a city dweller and the accent of a Cape Cod bean-eater. His fingers were white and slender and his hands blue-veined. The gusty wind off the solid ice in the bay and from the berg field out to sea made him shiver in spite of several layers of Fifth Avenue clothes. He carried in his hand a fair-sized black satchel on which was engraved in gold letters: "*Cyrus Cabot Marling, M. D.*"

"Be youse t' doctor that wuz comin' ashore?" the livyere asked, eyeing the satchel.

"Yes, I am Doctor Marling," he replied. He extended his hand. "Is it your family I was to see?"

"No, it ain't. I'm Gaspard Ellis. It wuz Sam Seelig's that need youse. I'm to take youse on t' komatik."

"The what?"

"T' dog sled. It's a pretty fair randy around t' point an' across t' bay to Seelig's cove. 'Bout fifteen miles."

"I thought the messenger said it was quite near. Why didn't the ship put in at the cove?"

"They's some bad reefs hid under t' ice in t' bay. If t' ice is good, we'll make it in two hours." Gaspard replied, a little aloof. Evidently the tender, shivering doctor did not rate very highly with him.

"D'youse want to make it on racquets or ride t' komatik?" he asked, as they started up the swell toward his little split-log cabin in the shelter of a clump of black balsam.

"I'll—I'll ride the sled," Marling ventured. "I never walked on snow-shoes and wouldn't be able to travel fast."

That didn't raise Gaspard's opinion of the doctor. He seemed to think that if the lives of Sam Seelig and his wife depended upon what this fellow could do for them, they wouldn't see another day.

The doctor went inside the cabin and stood by the stove while Gaspard hurriedly buckled his team to the komatik, a slender, pliant, twelve-foot affair shod with walrus

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ivory and lashed across the top so that it took uneven ground like a snake. The brisk wind was steadily getting stronger. Noting that, Gaspard fitted a pole to the sled and put up a good spread of canvas, keeping it furled for the present.

While one of the other trappers held the team, he went into the cabin, threw some lassy seal-bun into a nunny-bag, strapped on his racquets, and gave Marling a heavy silver-tip overcoat. The doctor muffled himself up on the front of the sled. Gaspard picked up his twenty-foot whip; shouted, "Up along, youse!" and the komatik shot down the swell and out upon the ice.

With the wind at their backs, it took them less than half an hour to reach the rocky point of the tickle. Ten miles of open bay stretched ahead of them. Gaspard stopped the team and jabbed the ice with the butt of his whip.

The wind had swept across the open ice till the snow was but a couple inches thick. Gaspard stood for a moment thinking. Around his feet the snow began to get lead-colored.

"Why are we hesitating?" the doctor asked, coming up out of his wraps.

"I wuz thinkin' it 'ud be a bit safer to go across by sail without t' pups," Gaspard replied. "T' ice is pretty thin an' they ain't much snow atop it."

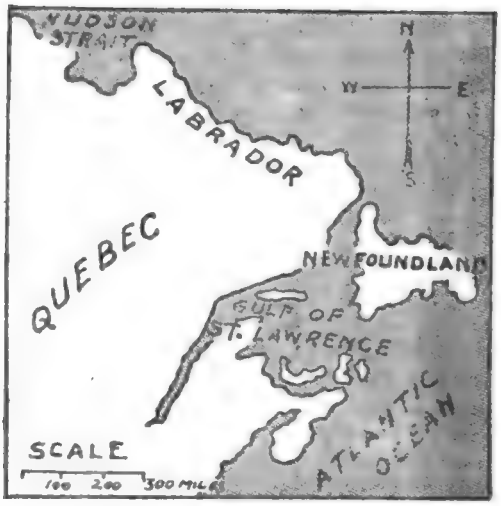
"Why don't we go around, then?" Marling asked a trifle anxiously.

Gaspard grunted.

"It's thirty mile around t' head of t' bay, an' t' coast komatik trail is frightful rocky. Besides, Seelig an' his wife need attention quickest we can get there. Nobody been there with 'em since I left to get youse. We'll spank across t' bay."

He unbuckled the willing huskies and started them home. They trotted off in a line, tails over their backs. The lead-colored spot around the komatik and the place where Gaspard stood was getting wider. Gaspard hastily spread the canvas, gave the sled a shove, and jumped on. In two minutes the komatik was skimming along faster than the huskies could have taken it.

THE livyere was crouched at the rear end of the sled, busy with the sail and with steering. By dextrous shifting of his weight he guided the scudding komatik over the hummocky field. But with his simple rigging in the strong wind and with no noselead on the sled, he had little control over the general direction. They flew along with the wind, heading straight as an arrow across the bay.



The broad white meadow beneath them, the checkerboard sky overhead, the flashing pink granite swells on shore and the stately march of the bergs outside the bay in the applegreen water, with the bright spring sun playing over it all, brought Marling out of his bundles, wide-eyed and marveling at the strange scene. At the edge of the bay ice, clouds of ivory gulls wheeled and screamed, darting down into the shoals of capulin. Robber gerfalcons poised over the gulls, swooping upon them when they rose with fish. High V's of gray wavies and old-squaws, strings of phalarope, shearwaters and Hudson's curlews, single pairs of trumpeter swans, whooping cranes and black-throated loons were noisily winging their way to the great island rookeries north of the Straits.

Gaspard paid little attention to Marling's rapturous "By Jove!" or "My word, how gorgeous!" It would have taken a sharper eye than the worthy doctor's to detect anxiety on the face of the livyere. Gaspard was leaning heavily to the left, warping the komatik as deeply into the bay as he could without slowing it down. While the doctor was rejoicing in the exhilarating fling, Gaspard's keener senses were noting the heave of the heavy groundswell and the springiness of thin ice beneath the komatik.

Two miles out in the bay, the hummocks

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and uneven ice left off. The jagged field had been formed the Fall previous by the on-shore wind driving old slob and floes in close where they were frozen in the regular bay ice. On the level stretch, polished as smooth as a mirror, there was scarcely any snow. The komatik clipped along faster than ever. But even so, when Gaspard took a hasty glance behind them, he saw that the tracks of the sled runners were lead-colored, showing how thin and dangerous the bay ice had become. It sank perceptibly as the komatik passed; but being sea ice, it gave down without cracking or giving warning.

Gaspard tried to warp the sled still farther to the left as he felt the groundswell from the open sea getting more noticeable. But with most of the weight on one runner which bit through the thin crust of snow, the komatik slowed down dangerously. The leaden warning crept up alarmingly close to the komatik; and Gaspard had to let the sled take its course parallel to the ice line of the outer bay.

"Perfectly marvelous!" the doctor ejaculated, slewing sideways in his seat to get a straight view of a small berg standing close in.

The white caps had gnawed at its base till it was mushroom-shaped, the umbrella a glittering opaque white and the stalk a scintillating crystal blue. "By Jove, that's wonderful!"

"Set still," Gaspard snapped, the tug of the line jerking the words from him. "Lay down flatest youse can an' don't move."

"Why, what is the trouble, Ellis?"

"We're on thin ice. Ever' time youse move, t' komatik buckles. Get down."

Marling turned a white face to the livyere.

"Thin ice? You mean there is danger of us going *through*?"

Gaspard answered slowly, unconcernedly.

"Not much danger, skippin' along this fast. But they's no stoppin' or slowin' up till we get across."

The doctor sank back in his seat and sat still as a rock. In spite of the delicate situation, Gaspard had to grin at Marling's white face. Plainly he was trembling with fright.

In his thirty-eight years of "swiling down north," hunting and trapping in the bleak *Pais d'en Haut*, and fishing in any kind of boat and all kinds of weather along the rocky coast, Gaspard had a score of times been in as tight a pinch as he was in now. The very silver-tip, whose hide was keeping the frightened doctor from getting frost-bitten, had been finished off by eight inches of a kiliutok below the fifth rib, after six bullets from a Mannlicher-Schoenauer had failed to stop the brute. Physical fear was not in his make-up. Though he had spoken lightly to Marling about the thin ice, Gaspard knew very well that if they were to get across, wind and ice and luck would have to be with them. Still he handled the line as deftly and guided the komatik as coolly as if he were flensing a marten behind his cabin.

As they came within two miles of the center of the bay, Gaspard saw, two hundred yards ahead, what looked like a sinuous green-gray snake twining across their path and running out of sight in both directions, but widening toward the open water. His face paled a shade beneath its bronze.

"Young lead," he muttered to himself. "T' off-shore wind'll open 'em quick. Six miles to go, but we're sure goin'!"

The little rift in the ice was not over six inches wide. The lithe komatik took it with no more than a slight tremor, and clipped on at full tilt, as if it understood the danger and was putting its best runner forward to get the men off the ice before the leads opened wider.

Gaspard rose carefully to his knees and watched ahead. Before many minutes another lead, a wider one, appeared. It was a good foot across. Anxiously he watched it swim near. The komatik took it, but the front end, under the doctor's weight, ducked uncomfortably. If the lead had been a foot wider, the runners would have snagged and plunged the sled head-first through the ice.

Gaspard inched forward on the sled.

"Marling!" he spoke sharply.

The doctor looked around fearfully.

"Take it easy," Gaspard cautioned, "but move back 'bout three feet on t' komatik. Don't jiggle t' thing, but hurry up. Then lay still an' flat!"

Marling loosened his stiff finger-hold on the top lashings of the komatik and obeyed without question. His eyes caught sight of the lead they had just passed, and full understanding of Gaspard's reason burst upon him. He gasped, too frightened to speak.

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The wisdom of the move was demonstrated decisively not three minutes later. Considerably past the center of the bay, Gaspard caught sight of another lead ahead. It was so wide that even he was frightened for a moment. It was inconceivable that the komatik could take it, if it kept straight for the lead. At imminent danger of slowing the sled up till it would break through the ice, he swerved it sharply to the left, in order to cross the lead as far to the left as possible. Two hundred yards away, he swung it straight again and let the sled gather speed.

The lead was fully two and a half feet wide where the komatik hit it. The nose, not burdened by Marling's weight, shot across without snagging on the lip of the ice. In the tenth of a second when the weighted body of the sled passed over the lead, Gaspard felt a sickening sag and heard the ominous lap of the icy water. But both ends of the komatik were on firm ice, and its speed was great enough to shoot it on across and out of danger.

"That wuz a close 'un, doctor," Gaspard yelled, grimacing.

Marling did not move or answer. Gaspard worked the sled to the left as much as he dared and watched for other leads. They were getting close enough to see the fish stage in Seelig's cove and the red roof of his cabin set down in a thicket of Bankian Pine.

"I think we're clear of t' leads, doctor," Gaspard added, as the hummocks of the other shore came near.

Still no answer from Marling. Gaspard moved nearer and looked at him.

"Holy Moses!" he snorted. "Scared plumb out'n his senses. He's a great 'un, he is!"

II

THE doctor was still shaking when the komatik, with a final kick, left the ice and came to a precipitous stop in a snow-drift. He extricated his satchel from the bank and followed Gaspard up the slope to the cabin. A string of lean snarling huskies squatted near the door made him pause till Gaspard cleared the way with his whip. Marling pushed open the door and went in.

The Seelig cabin was a tiny, two-room affair, sparely furnished but snug and comfortable enough. A big sheet iron stove full of crackling spruce kept the room warm. All cracks in the windows and walls were stuffed shut; the cabin had a close heavy air that made the doctor frown.

On a bunk against the wall lay a young livyere of twenty-eight. His right hand and forearm, crudely bandaged, hung over the side of the bunk. He breathed heavily and painfully, with a rattling deep in his chest.

A slender comely woman of twenty-five was lying on a cot near the stove. Her face, framed in a mass of black wavy hair, was colorless and pain-drawn. She did not move when the two men entered, but the young livyere turned his head toward them.

"That's Sam Seelig," Gaspard said bluntly. "He froze his lungs totin' a cribou in home durin' a cold snap a week back, an' his hand got nipped bad. Sam, this is t' doctor I got off t' steamer."

Seelig's eyes lit up hopefully.

"Glad to—have you here—doctor," he rasped. "We're in a—pretty bad fix with—both of—us down to once. Ellis here has—been takin' care of us. If it hadn't been for him—findin' us an' stickin'—by us——"

"Don't talk," Marling interrupted crisply. "Keep silent."

He deliberately took off his light gloves and warmed his hands by the stove, the while he looked around the cabin.

"Pull that cloth out of that wicket and let a little air in here," he told Gaspard.

The livyere obeyed reluctantly. Marling approached the cot and felt the woman's pulse. When he laid his hand on her forehead, she looked up at him out of eyes full of intense pain.

"It's all right, Mrs. Seelig," he said gently, smiling. "Now, let's see what this trouble is all about."

He drew down the cover and bent over her form. Deftly and quickly he made his diagnosis. There was surety in the touch of his finger and a confident mastery in his every action.

Gaspard had moved away a few steps and was awkwardly pretending to be busy with something or other.

"Bring me the satchel and some water," Marling said over his shoulder.

He mixed from a vial and with his hand under her head, gave the young wife the medicine. Then he covered her lightly and went to the bunk.

When he unbandaged Seelig's hand, his brows wrinkled. Gaspard looked in another

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direction. Marling listened to the pulmonary infection.

He took Gaspard aside and spoke to him casually, as if he were not talking about the patients.

"His hand is in a very bad shape. I shall have to amputate two of his fingers, but I think I can save the hand. His left lung and the top of his right are infected, but with proper care he can get over that."

"And her?" Gaspard asked, following the doctor's purposefully simple words.

"She is in a critical state. One more day and there would have been no hope whatever. It's a major operation, as quickly as possible."

"A—a what?"

"A very serious operation. You will have to aid me as much as you can. Clean several receptacles thoroughly and have boiling water ready at hand."

Gaspard paled, but set about Marling's orders while Marling worked over Seelig and eased his breathing.

The doctor prepared his slim array of instruments and motioned to Gaspard to come and be ready. The big livyere approached reluctantly. He followed Marling's deft motions, fascinated and trembling.

A slight anesthesia was all that was necessary, for Seelig's arm up to his elbow was numb and senseless. The operation took less than two minutes. When Marling had finished the cauterizing, he looked up.

Gaspard was shaking till he dropped the instrument Marling had handed him.

"Come, come," Marling said curtly. "Keep your nerve, man. We've more serious work yet to do. I need you, God knows. Snap out of it."

Gaspard pulled himself together with an effort. Marling watched Seelig come to again, told him some ancient physician's joke that made him smile in spite of his pain; and then moved over to the cot.

Under his breath, Marling swore a polite oath at his lack of suitable instruments for the operation facing him. At best Gaspard was a clumsy aid. In his shaking condition, he was but little better than nobody. Marling poured him a good swallow from a vial labeled "*Spiritus Frumentii*" and made him don a pair of sterilized gloves.

The operation that Marling performed in the little cabin was one that he spoke proudly about to medical friends in later years. He had to work under the handicap of totally unsuitable instruments, clumsy help, and very light anesthesia; for the patient's vitality had been drained by her long illness and her coming to again was uncertain. For the same reason, and to avoid infection from the air of the stuffy cabin, he had to work at lightning speed. It was a scant eight minutes from the tremulum of the incision to the last stitch.

As Marling was anxiously watching the patient, lost to all other things, he heard a heavy sound behind him. Turning, he saw that Gaspard had slumped down into a chair, white and shaking. The livyere's nerve had snapped. With his aid no longer needed, he was helpless as a babe.

"By Jove!" Marling muttered. "Keeled over! No more nerve than a jack-rabbit—around a thing like this!"

III

THAT afternoon, when the young wife had regained consciousness and passed into a restful sleep and Seelig was breathing inaudibly, Marling went out where Gaspard was hitching up the unruly huskies.

"Tell Captain McLarry to give you this list of things, Ellis," he said, handing him a slip of paper. "And tell him I shall have to stay here to watch these folk. They can't be moved. Tell him to pick me up at your place on his return trip to Halifax. And, also, tell Mrs. Marling to go right on and enjoy the vacation for both of us. I shall get along nicely here. I want those things as quickly as you can return with them."

Before giving the word to the huskies, Gaspard looked Marling straight between the eyes and held out his hand.

"Doctor," he stammered, "if youse ain't plumb disgusted with me for bein' a ninny there in t' cabin, I'd like to shake hands with youse."

"Tut, tut!" Marling retorted. "I've been as badly scared myself. That was just out of your line."

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ORDINARY MEN

by Royce Brier

Author of "Free Water."

ACROSS the windshield was a green pennant with yellow block letters—

CLOVERLEAF, OREGON

Sam Wellman operated a dairy store in Cloverleaf, but just at this moment he was a long distance from home, though not so far as he was ultimately going to be. Slim Gaston operated a two-man garage, and he likewise was far from Cloverleaf; nor was he at his destination—not by ten flat tires and a string of cinder cones!

Just ordinary men, Sam and Slim, who reckoned the relative importance of the home-town pennant as situated somewhere in the tight little crack between gasoline and oil.

"Y' see," said Sam to a San Bernardino garage mechanic as black as the end man in a minstrel show, "me and Slim, here, come down to look over yer country. Can't say we're stuck on it—not that you ain't got a nice little city here. Nice palm-trees an' all that. 'Course, we're goin' out in the desert—out through Victorville. Guess they ain't got palm-trees out there. They's a palm-tree an' two pepper-trees up in Roseburg. Apple center of the universe—Roseburg and Cloverleaf. Got a palm-tree though.

"Only thing saves this country for me—palm-trees. Don't like the heat. Don't like the water. Water's hot—burns yer tongue—'cept you git it in a sody fountain."

"You ever been in the desert?" asked the garage man.

"Yup. Don't want much more of it; but you gotta take it, they say, if you wanta git to the Gran' Cañon. Slim an' me come through from Bakersfield—that thirty-mile straightaway to the Skyline Highway, y' know."

The garage man smiled.

"Paved," he said succintly.

"Not a —— bit cooler fer that," returned Sam.

"No, but a lot easier on the spinal colyum and rubber," the garage man said. "Say, you got a experience ahead you. I come from Amboy, myself."

"Well, we come from Cloverleaf, Oregon," said Sam. "You wanta see a real town an' a real man's country, you come up to Cloverleaf. I ain't knockin' San Bern'dino, unnerstan'. But say, they's a real country—up to Cloverleaf.

"Say, the water there's cool; comes right down out the Siskyous. Lots of green trees, evergreens, fir, hemlock. Plenty of rain, ever'thing green an' fresh. Not hard rain. No storms, unnerstan'. Just a nice, soft-soundin' drizzle. Oregon drizzle, they call it."

"I've heard of it," said the garage man dryly. "Well, you gents won't get much drizzle out around Amboy. Time you meet up with that sweet —— you'll be desert rats and wanta stay."

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"Huh! Naw, we live up in Cloverleaf. We're just a coupla ordinary men, lookin' around a bit."

IT IS forty-three miles over Cajon Pass from San Bernardino to Victorville. Not a bad forty-three miles, as miles down there run. A little hot—perhaps a hundred, maybe a hundred and ten or fifteen if the season is right. But forty-three miles paved.

From Victorville on there is the desert. A capital D is better—Desert. For the Desert is an institution, like the Statue of Liberty, or Chicago Crime, or American Optimism.

This last, by the way, was precisely what possessed Sam Wellman and Slim Gaston. Burdened with optimism, Sam and Slim had left Cloverleaf a few weeks before, joining that vast, and ever vaster, host whose view is for ever partly obliterated by the tail light and spare tire of the car ahead. Sam and Slim liked California, but that is not to say they did not miss the mountain streams, the evergreens and the Oregon drizzle, each of which is always in plain view from the window of the Cloverleaf post-office.

Behold an ancient flivver creeping out of Victorville, past the big cement plant and into that vast, arid wilderness of saffron dust and lava flows and cinder cones under a sky like a blue gas flame. Like all of the flivvers south of thirty-five, this one carried a wreath of water-bags, canvas contrivances with a big red apple imprinted upon one side—why, no one knows, unless it is to recall to the dusty wayfarer, Roseburg, which has one palm-tree and two pepper-trees and admits interest in a million or so apple trees, stretching all of the way to Cloverleaf in the cool Oregon drizzle.

The flivver did not carry enough camping-equipment to care for Ringling's circus; but many a Missouri family of nine bound for Lost Paradise with a dollar in cash and a million in hope carried less.

Sam sat at the wheel, and Slim sat beside him. Two men could not have presented more contrast. Sam was short and pudgy, and he shook like jelly as the car bumped along. His fat hand on the wheel was as red as a ham and as round, if it was smaller. His thinned-out strands of yellow hair quivered in the open-furnace-door breeze, but his gray eyes twinkled with an animation that peered through the more manifest discomfort of the heat.

Slim, on the other hand, was frankly against the Desert. He cursed it fluently and ran a slim finger along his hooked nose and listened with a certain degree of dolefulness for a knock in the motor. Slim was the mechanician of the tour, and he reserved his talents for more vital matters than driving.

Neither would admit it, but both were glad they were not dealing out ring gears and pinions, or eggs and Wisconsin brick cheese. Meanwhile they could think what they pleased of the Desert, and they thought with some heat—though considerably below that registered by the mercury—that any man who would come here more than once was a blockhead and a nit-wit, and that any man who lived here, as it appeared a few did, was a dad-blasted imbecile. They enjoyed their misery in full measure.

With the customary tire trouble and a steaming radiator the two men drove well into the desert that day, over the Great Lava Flow of Pisgah and into Calcutta. Calcutta, unlike its Indian godmother, is no place of teeming millions. Calcutta is a store, a Chinese restaurant and a gas station, where gasoline is sold for thirty-three cents a gallon, or three for a dollar. The chamber of commerce consists in Berry Poulson, who conceived the three-for-a dollar idea; Jake Anther, who sells sour ice-cream sundaes for thirty-five cents and would charge fifty if he could get sweet ice-cream; and Fong Lee.

A rare and fortuitous dust storm ushered Sam and Slim into a chamber meeting shortly before midnight and changed the course of their lives for better or for worse. The dust storm held them in Calcutta, and from the three natives they heard of the great borax discoveries south of Thunderhead Crater. To be sure Poulson and Anther were Calcutta boosters; but laundry soap has an honest ring that perpetual-motion machines have not.

It may as well be said that there are no borax deposits south of Thunderhead Crater. It may be added that Poulson and Anther had no material interests in their discussion dissimilar to those of enthusiasts who delight in revealing that they live in no mean city, and that due to a concert of circumstances, such as the proximity of oil, iron ore, climate or rumored flivver plants it will grow less mean as the years roll by.

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Thus borax played no part in the story of Sam and Slim, but the search for borax did. The travelers talked things over with the chamber of commerce and decided to look around. The Grand Cañon would stay where it was. Laundry soap might wash away.

Hence the two started off a dawn or two later for a look around. There is an ample field for this employment in the Mohave Desert. Indeed, the Desert postulates little else.

"This is sure a nice wide space for a May dance," said Sam as they paused to put a new rope around a tire, while a little sidewinder rattled viciously in the mesquite.

"Yes, fer one of them barefoot dances," Slim replied as the rattlesnake glided off. "How that little rascal makes a living for himself here gets me. This country looks like a panting of What's the Use to me. I ain't cut out for nothin' but heavy rain."

"Me, neither," returned Sam. "Shall we go back?"

"Not a chanct."

"Good. I ain't no quitter neither. This country ain't what would 'tract a sane man in his senses for long, or more than onct; but I ain't no quitter. Onct I got stuck in a snow-storm up near Crater Lake——"

"Ye gods," groaned Slim, "lay off the snow-storm. I was just thinkin', ain't the King's English funny! Crater—that's a lake. And we are now ridin' through Bristol Lake. I guess they was water in this when them hunderd-foot alligators was crawlin' around, huh?"

"Yeah," said Sam; "the Creator certainly went about it, an' He made certain to satisfy ever'body, puttin' in the Rogue River an' this sandy wash both in the same week, you might say. Strikes me He went almost too far. How any ordinary men like you or me could see anything in this yellow —— but a nightmare an' fever into one is over my head. Yup, strikes me the Creator did a lot of unnec'ssary work when He made this rag-tag country."

"Yup," agreed Slim, taking a delicate turn in the carbureter needle.

They drove on into the golden silence, and the sun overhead quivered in its wheeling course, and the white-hot desert face stretched out interminably—or were those mountains, those faint films of blue against the blue gas-flame sky?

Toward evening the two drew closer, and they saw that they were mountains, crinkly crimson and lavender velvet piled in the evening sun. The desert grew milk-blue with distance, and the mountains from crimson deepened to maroon, to rich sienna and to purple, from lavender to violet gray, and to purple, until all of the twilight was purple, until one could feel purple, and hear it, and taste it, and sense it in the very depths of his soul.

"I gotta admit we ain't got colors like that in Cloverleaf," said Sam. "Gotta admit it."

"Well—" Slim lit a cigaret reflectively—"maybe not. No, guess I gotta admit this is a pretty country."

"An' quiet," said Sam.

The rattle of their pots and pans ripped through the ineffable silence like a band saw in an Oregon fir log. The stars came out like diamonds on black velvet in a jewel shop window, and ultimately a silver simitar of a moon appeared.

Hardy desert travelers after two days, they traveled on in the night and consumed the next day in sleep. They skirted Red Owl Mountain, passed Coyote Well, which has medicinal value only, and in another dawn gazed upon an illimitable gray basin with Thunderhead Crater against the pale-gold horizon. The next night they made twenty-four miles, encountered another specious spring and regaled each other with a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the water that comes down out of the Siskyous.

THEY came at length to a low lava-flow range headed by a cinder cone, crouching like a tawny lion in the bronze sunlight of the hot morning. They found a prospector's hole, and they hoped it was the one to which they had been directed, though it was one thing to receive specific directions and another to make a sortie out into this boundless expanse and follow them.

Apparently the lava-flow range was on the fringe of a sand drift, for soft white sand glittered in a dark defile of the range, and the lava cakes showed the effects of sand erosion. Despite a persistent conception of desert land as presenting the classic appearance of the Sahara, with camel and praying sheik silhouetted atop a dune at sunset, the Mohave contains little sand-drift country. Sam and Slim did not know that. They

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had waited for sand for three days, and they were not a little pleased to encounter it.

By an arduous process consuming a morning they contrived to pilot their abused flivver through the defile and emerged to behold a sight such as few men behold in the Mohave. A vast expanse of rolling sand-drift country lay before them to the very horizon.

A valley confronted them in the immediate foreground. It was perhaps two hundred feet deep, and lay between the lava range and a dark arm that lay in the golden sea of sand like a hooked reef in a sunlit ocean. This reef of partly buried lava extended for several miles parallel to the larger range from which the men had just come. And it was presumably along this lava reef that outcroppings of borax were to be found.

They decided to go down into the valley. It held a cool and shadowy invitation, and the end toward them was smooth with heavily crusted sand drifts from ages of gentle westerly winds. This crust easily supported an automobile; it was as suave as an asphalt street, and gently sloping, so that the adventurers could easily roll down into the valley.

They coasted down slowly, astonished at the hardness of the crust, recalling the snow crusts of Mount Hood, and lulled with the ease with which their car proceeded after days of seemingly interminable vibration.

"Jus' like the Pacific Highway through Cloverleaf," said Sam. "I never see much sand as this."

The valley was cool—the mercury was down to a hundred that night. No desert tourist discards his ragged tires, for he has found that they burn with a bright flame, a dark smudge and an unholy stench. Sam and Slim forsook the ubiquitous gasoline stove and partook of rubberoid bacon and eggs.

In the morning they did some walking about the valley, but they found no borax deposits on the side hills. They remained another day exploring, but decided that they had entered the wrong defile on the other side of the range. They were reluctant to leave the smooth, hard floor of the valley for the more rugged desert, but they packed in the morning.

"We better go up by our same tracks we come down on," said Slim. "Then we'll be sure to get that hard-packed stuff."

But to their surprize they were unable to find the tracks of their car as it had coasted down into the valley. A light breeze had drifted over what little imprint had been made by the coasting car and obliterated it. After a few minutes of futile attempt to find the tracks they gave over the effort and started for the top of the grade. They drove a hundred feet up the incline, and their car sank through the crust into fine soft sand.

They were able to back down the slight grade, and they started again at another point; but the same futile grinding of gears was repeated, and the car sank hub deep.

"Holy Smokertown! Whatza matter of this sand crust?" queried Sam. "Has she gone out from under us?"

Slim saw it all in a flash, saw how they had been trapped!

"Sam," he said, "we're in a jam right now."

"Whatza matter of this sand crust, I wanta know?"

Slim lit a cigaret.

"Nothin'—when yer coastin' down under compression. But soon's you apply power goin' up the wheels tears right through. We're stuck!"

"Stuck!" echoed Sam as the fact dawned upon him, though the full terror of its significance had not come to him.

"Stuck!" he repeated.

"Stuck is right!" echoed Slim. "Say, when ye're stuck in this country ye're *stuck*."

Sam stared at the hub caps gently kissing the bland surface of the sand drift.

"Let's try it again," he said.

They shoveled out and back to the foot of the drift, only to fail miserably to make headway on the return. They tried a slow, even pull on low gear. They cleared the solid floor of the valley of lava rocks for several hundred feet back and took a run at the mocking, gentle slope; but the car would not pull in high gear, and when they changed gears it sank into the sand with a diminuendo song of futility. Again they were up to the hubs, the rear end housing resting on the sand. They had made but three hundred feet of the thousand-foot slope.

This time the work of digging out was more arduous, for they were unused to the heat of the country, and manual labor quickly tired them.

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All of that day, with lagging steps and cursing tongues, they tried to cheat relentless circumstance. They tried it with one man stationed up the grade, catching the car and pushing at the moment of changing gears, but his own feet sank into the crust. They unloaded their paraphernalia and took the top from the car to reduce the weight, but it accomplished nothing. As the violet twilight closed about them they sat about a camp-fire in the valley, disconsolately talking in low tones.

Afoot they could traverse that thousand feet in three minutes, standing where they had stood two days before. Yet so far as concerned the hope of life, that smooth, treacherous surface might as well have been an infinite abyss.

They did walk to the summit in the night, which was radiant even under a crescent moon, and they looked down upon the tiny pink glow of their fire in the depths of the valley.

"We couldn't never walk it from here, I s'pose," Sam said.

Slim shook his head.

"Seventy miles? Not you an' me, nor anybody else, an' carry water. We ain't got any too much water."

"No, we ain't got any too much water," said Sam.

"We drunk a lot workin' today," said Slim.

"Yeah—we drunk a lot today."

They were reluctant to return to the floor of the valley. There was a sweet illusion in remaining here in the chimerical aura surrounding security, even though their honest knowledge told them it was naught but a chimerical aura.

"We gotta get that car," said Sam.

"How?"

They returned down the slope, averting their eyes from the dark line of shadows that marked the farthest advances of the car in its plunges, a line much like the stain of waves that have wet a dry beach.

In the dawn they explored the valley several miles down, hoping to find an outlet. They were gone throughout the morning, but they found that the lower end of the valley opened on a wall of sand that drifted far into the space between the steep mountainside and the lava arm. This sand was not even crusted.

They were penned in a long elliptical valley, with steep lava and cinder slides on the long walls and sand drifts at each end.

"Trapped like a coupla desert rats," said Slim.

"Once I git outa this my desert-rat days is over," Sam declared.

"Yer countin' the chickens before you got any eggs," Slim returned with a wry smile.

Sam said nothing. They were dispirited and exhuasted by a drain of nervous energy, and when they returned to their camp-site they lay down to sleep.

Slim was awakened by a shriek and a kick in the ribs. He beheld pudgy little Sam dancing like a madman about the array of pots and pans. In a wild moment of despair he was certain Sam had lost his senses.

"I got it!" Sam shrieked. "By the great Lord Harry, I got it! We're a blankety-blank parcel of dumb Bennies."

"Now, Sam—" started Slim soothingly.

Sam seized Slim by the foot and dragged him, with sharp lava rocks offering hindrance, from beneath the car.

"I got it!" he shrieked.

"What?" asked Sam, thinking to humor his daft companion.

"We'll take the bus apart and pack 'er up the hill," Sam roared. *"Whoopee!"*

Slim sat bolt upright.

"Holy cat!" he exclaimed.

Then a sober moment overcame him.

"Two-day job," he said. "Maybe three. Maybe four. The two of us couldn't carry that motor. The body——"

"The —— you say!" snapped Sam. "We'll take the cylinder-head and crank-case off. We'll tear 'er down till it'll be like carryin' so many papers of pins up the grade, thasswot we'll do. We'll take a ax an' chop the body in two an' tie 'er together with rope. What do we care about a body anyways if we got four wheels an' a engine at the top of that hill?"

"We gotta carry water—an' we ain't got much."

"Less to carry. Well, don't sit there like a yap. We ain't got the Rogue River flowin' down this valley, an' this ain't God's country where a man can live if he wants to. Shake a leg. It's our only chanct."

"I guess ye're right on that," admitted Slim.

Sam was already stripping the car of seat-cushions.

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IT TOOK them several hours in the dark to remove the body from the car, but once that was accomplished they could work with some speed. It was with the motor that they encountered the greatest difficulty. It weighed seven hundred pounds complete. Slim had torn down many cars, but he had always had the use of chain tackle and an overhead track. Even deprived of its crank-case and head, the motor was unconscionably heavy, and they saw obstacles that loomed the more prodigiously because of the strain they were under.

They tried making a platform of floor-boards and carrying the motor on the rear-end assembly, one man pulling on the shaft and the other pushing, but they found the combined weight of the motor, shaft and rear end mounted on wheels too great for the strength of two men. They succeeded in getting the rear end and shaft up the slope to the summit, and dawn saw them toilsomely lugging at the gear assembly, starter and generator, radiator and battery.

They debated whether it would not be better to sleep during the day and complete the work the next night, if it was to be completed; but Slim saw ahead the arduous task of assembling the car. Both could see that the labor and nerve dissipation was wearing upon them fearfully, and they worked in a frenzy.

They had the greatest difficulty in getting the frame to the summit. A thousand feet seemed to them like a thousand miles, and the heat of the day beat upon them remorselessly. At length they slept in the shadow of the car body, and they were troubled with fitful dreams of insurmountable difficulties set for them to solve, while giants stood over them with lashes of fire.

That night they started up with the motor. It is a strange and contradictory phase of extreme hardship that the weakling ofttimes endures it relatively well, while the strong man goes under. Sam was fat and sold butter and eggs, while Slim was sinewy and put tires on rims. Yet Slim wore down at this life-and-death task with alarming swiftness, while Sam worked stolidly on. The night was inexpressibly hot, and both gave way at moments to mild hysteria, but it was Sam that stood as the indefatigable driving power behind the scheme for their salvation.

Morning saw all of their car save the body scattered along the top of the slope; and in the white dawn, while Slim tossed in sleep in the shade of a boulder, Sam worked on bringing supplies and their water to the summit. That water supply was pitifully low now, for they had overstayed their time several days. There were but three bags left, and with the best of good fortune they could not hope to reach more within four days.

Sam made six trips that morning. He wanted more than he wanted anything else to lie down, but even as his confused faculties strove to outlast exhaustion he fumbled at hub caps and frame bolts, trying in his maladroit fashion to make a start at assembling the car. Finally he slipped quietly down in the sun.

A sort of a nebulous whimsy told him he would never awaken unless he changed his position, and he crawled, half-conscious, and put his head in the shadow of the motor.

He awoke with a sense of infinite debility, and he heard a mechanical hammering. For a long time he wondered what it was, and finally turned to behold Slim working on the car.

Sam staggered to one of the water-bags and looked into it.

"Workin' too hard," he said thickly. "Have drink."

"Jus' had one," mumbled Slim, and he mumbled a lie. "Have one y'self."

"Had one 'fore I went sleep," said Sam.

Slim had accomplished considerable, getting the frame mounted and setting the gasoline tank in place. The two worked dizzily placing the gear assembly, but they were failing fast, unable to stand more than a few moments at a time of handling the hot metal parts.

"We gotta have something to sit on 'side the gas tank," said Slim. "An' the body's outa the question."

The body, a little black square, loomed like a large boulder on the floor of the valley, and Sam regarded it with misted eyes.

"I'll fix 'at," he said. "Have drink."

"Jus' had one."

"The —— you did!"

"Sure, while you wasn't lookin'. Have one y'self."

"Ain't thirsty."

Slim crept off during the afternoon, and after eating a little and drinking, went to sleep. Sam crept down the slope toward

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the body with misgiving, dragging the ax after him like a drunken man dragging a coat. He was not certain he would return. Well, Slim had a chance to get out.

Slim was some partner, lying that way about the water. Not many men would lie that way about the water. Many would lie, but not that way.

In some way Sam chopped the sheet iron of the body from the frame of the front seat. In some way he dragged it up the interminable slope. He wondered how they retained their sanity. He knew it would not last long after the last drop of water. He was visited by a long period of delirium and a longer period of blankness.

He was awakened by the sound of Slim pounding again. Would Slim never give up? Sam did not realize that he himself was as good a fighter as ever was born. He was astonished to find Slim bolting the motor on the frame. In a moment of clearness he saw that this was an incredible thing.

"I'm getting smart," said Slim with a weak grin. "I dug out under the wheels an' let the frame down, long's I couldn't get the motor up."

Sam went about devising ways of hanging supplies on the rear end of the frame. It was dawn, he saw. The passage of time was becoming a very dim conception with him.

"We gotta get away today," he said. "We can't last another day after this one."

"We're off in a hour," said Slim.

He seemed considerably brightened by the prospect, almost delirious, and Sam caught some of the delirium.

"We're off if we gotta stay much longer," he said in a weak attempt at a joke.

When the motor coughed once or twice and settled down to a steady hum, they were like men abruptly released by some powerful stimulant that has buoyed them up. They were spent with the drive of the first law of nature, and as this drive slackened they too slackened, and one of them cried and one of them laughed wildly.

"If we croak out in the desert, aw right," said Sam as the skeleton automobile made its slow way down through the defile. "If we croak, aw right; we got this heap outa that —— —— valley!"

There are moments, even in the lives of ordinary men, when the love of living is mightier than the love of life.

They drove on, and on, and on, Slim handling the wheel, persisting with the tenacity of delirium that only he could handle it. They emerged from the defile and crossed the great basin, and Thunderhead Crater grew ever fainter in the distance. At the sulfur spring they filled their radiator.

Had they experienced tire or motor trouble it would have broken them. Their endurance was at an end. Their water was almost gone. They clung precariously on the brink of unreason, occasionally slipped a little over the brink, to catch themselves at the last moment and to cling desperately, madly, to a shred of sanity.

But their tires stood up and their motor hummed ceaselessly. They paused in the evening and lay an hour or two, half-awake, half-asleep. They went on, pushing the car to the limit, exhausting their reserve supply of oil as the radiator steamed and as the exhaust pipe glowed a dull red. Solemn night beheld them still rushing along through the unending purple hush, growing more reckless, more desperate as the miles and hours rolled backward. It was midnight when they began to despair.

"God! Only a auto light—jus' a auto light," prayed Slim.

"Las' drink," said Sam thickly.

He took a little sip and turned the bag over to Slim. Slim struck it from his hands, and the bag gurgled as the water ran away in the darkness.

Never to return. Away in the darkness. Never to return. The words ran in Sam's head like a great thunder.

He knew that Slim had broken. Slim drove on mechanically, but his mind was dead. A snake's tail twitches after death. Sam laughed. Slim drove on, but his mind was dead. A snake's tail twitches after death, long after death—until sundown, they say. Slim's hand piloted the car, but it was dead. He would drive on until sundown. Or was it sunrise? Sam laughed again. A snake's tail——

They had stopped. The car would not move for some reason. It was stuck. Well, it had been stuck before. Stuck on a snake's tail. Sam's laughter filled the appalling silence.

"God—a auto light!" whimpered Slim, and slumped abruptly in his seat.

But there was no light. Their own lights were gone. There was only darkness, and the figure of Slim slumped over in the seat.

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"He's dead," thought Sam.

It was an indescribable pain. He did not want Slim to die.

He reached for the starter, but he felt himself whirling off into a boundless distance. He floated without volition and without effort. He thought it was remarkable that he could float so easily and so softly off into the boundless distance. He wondered vaguely where he was going, and if Slim accompanied him. He looked and thought he saw Slim, but he was uncertain.

When he had floated for many ages he thought that it grew light. First there was a disk of light that grew amazingly into a blinding radiance that suffused him and seemed to merge with his being.

This feeling that the light was mingling with his being impalpably frightened him, and he feebly struggled with something, a tremendous weight. He could not pull it, because he could get no footing. He was floating. He pulled madly. He felt pain somewhere in the dancing universe of explosive light. He felt himself falling, over and over, the weight with him, why, he did not know.

There was a wail and a long-drawn shriek and a deafening crash, and Sam saw plainly the light vanish like a candle flame snuffed out in the wind, and heard a hurricane of sound, and saw and heard no more.

The brakeman of the Fast Mail came running up to the engineer.

"The lucky stiffs are back here," he shouted excitedly. "They just got off the track in time. I guess the body of the flivver got kicked into San Berdoo. Nothin' but a chassis wrapped around the telegraph pole."

"We'll run 'em into Calcutta," said the engineer imperturbably.

A YEAR later in a shiny new flivver Sam Wellman and Slim Gaston drove up to a garage in San Bernardino and were served by a mechanic as black as the end man in a minstrel show.

"Yeah," said Sam, "we figgered we'd look around down here a little more. Had a little bad luck last year. Can't say we're stuck on the country, though you got a nice little city here. Been up to Cloverleaf.

"Say, they's a real country, up to Cloverleaf. Water's cool, comes right down outa the Siskyous. Lots of green trees, evergreens. Plenty of rain. Lot's of good rain in Oregon. Oregon drizzle, they call it."

"You two fellas got the makin's of a coupla desert rats," said the garage man with a grin.

"Huh! Naw, we live up in Cloverleaf. We're just a coupla ordinary men, lookin' around a bit."

LETTERS FROM A TRAMP—AT SEA AGAIN

***by* Frederick Campbell**

WELL, I've had a scrap!

I was going on watch along the port alley, and there stood a big buck fireman, a Zulu, who didn't seem inclined to get out of the way.

Well, I gave him a bit of a push, and thought I heard him fall into the scuppers as I passed; but as I got to the bridge ladder, there was a patter of bare feet on the deck behind me, and up comes our dusky king to split my skull open with a —big shovel.

I bet you I jumped up the ladder quick, the shovel just catching my boot-heels, and then I jumped down again, and what does the silly fool do but lose his head and get scared and heave his shovel over the side, in favor of a bass broom. Well, I squeezed him by the throat till he coughed blood, and then went up to relieve Harris.

Bit later, I looked over the dodger for'ard, and saw Midnight walking around, looking for me with an ax. I saw him put it down behind the winch, and ask the bosun where I was; and then he picked it up again, and came aft. He hung around the foot of the ladder as if thinking of coming up, but changed his mind.

It was just as well he did.

I was waiting for him at the head of the ladder, with the deep sea lead——

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OVER THE HUMP

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

Charles Victor Fischer

Author of "Snootful, Gullets and Hawkeye," "Mad Wells," etc.

IT WAS mid-forenoon when "Wild" Baldwin awoke. He was in a native's shack on the island of Guam. He sat on a rickety chair, sprawled over a rickety table. He felt sick and heavy all over, and for many minutes after awakening his alcohol-poisoned brain refused duty. He heard the buzz and hum of the myriad birds and insects that thronged the wild valley, but these failed to bring an answer to the question pounding at his muddled brain—

"Where am I?"

Ideas were slow in coming. The first to come—probably because it had been the last to go—was—a drink. And following close on top of that came another— Back to the ship at noon today. These had been his last two mental acts of the night before.

The chair creaked noisily as he raised himself to an upright position and turned a blurred gaze out of the window at his elbow. On his face was the scowl of a man so utterly disgusted with himself that to put a loaded gun in his hands would have been murder.

It was a well-made face—when its owner was well; but booze-bloated and line-marked as it was now it was repulsive. The eyes, normally clear, large and hazel in color, were now red, glassy and half-covered by heavy, swollen lids. His dark-brown hair stood up as if he'd been running his fingers through it. Baldwin was thirty—but at that moment he looked all of forty.

For several minutes he sat looking out across the verdant, throbbing valley. The sun, mounting clear of a distant mountain top, threw a surge of life into him. He sat up a little straighter and threw back his well-formed shoulders. A moment later in a thick, husky voice he uttered one word, a name.

"Enos!"

A little brown man appeared at the door.

"Ketchum drink, eh?" the inebriate pigeon-Englished.

"No kin do," the native answered. "You drinkum all gin las' night."

"——!"

And Wild Baldwin scowled.

The native squatted on the floor.

"Maybe you lak me go to Agana, bring backum squareface?"

"Takum too long," Baldwin growled. "Furlough all gone. Must get backum ship."

"Maybe you lakum toddy," offered the little brown man. "Gotum plenty."

Baldwin grinned.

"Have to likum, I guess, Enos. Toddy no gotum much kick. Needum kick bad this morning. Have much bad dream. Many snakes, rats. Sure, go ahead; getum bambooful."

The native went out and proceeded to a

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coconut tree a short distance from the shack. He ran up the tree. No monkey in the world can hold a candle to a native of Guam for running up a coconut tree.

The topmost leaf of this tree was bent over, and its tip had been snipped off. Beneath this snipped-off tip hung a bamboo container about three feet long. Out of that leaf into the bamboo dripped Enos' toddy—a beverage somewhat like sweet cider in taste and containing about three per cent. of alcohol.

Returning to the shack, the native strained the contents of the bamboo through a cloth into a pitcher.

Baldwin drained it. The bamboo contained another pitcherful. He drained that also.

He now stood up, his scowl gone, reeling slightly but very much on his pins. He washed, combed his hair, then proceeded to shift from the suit of dirty dungaree into a suit of spotless Navy whites.

"Well, Enos," he said in a voice much clearer. "Have to getum backum ship. Ten days' furlough all gone."

"Me killum chicken. You wait I fryum?"

The gob shook his head.

"Whenum have heavy night no can eat next morning, Enos. Take many drinks to makum eat. Must get backum ship."

"Maybe long time you no come again."

"No can tell, Enos. Maybe, next time getum wild and go on um bat ship be in China—maybe Philippines—no can tell."

Baldwin then paid the native. Enos had been his cook, landlord and booze-runner for ten days. After which he left, proceeding down the valley toward the road that led to Piti, the harbor port.

WILD BALDWIN was a yeoman first-class in the Navy, serving on board the cruiser *Farallone*. He worked in the pay-office, was proficient, had a spotless record and was looked upon as a good shipmate.

Out of the eight hundred tars aboard the *Farallone* Wild Baldwin had seventy hundred and ninety-nine friends. He had one enemy—Wild Baldwin.

That Baldwin was an inebriate none of his shipmates knew. He was a solitary boozer of the periodical variety. All his sprees had been carried on in some town, hamlet or coconut grove remote from where the ship was. He managed a furlough of ten days every two or three months, and during that time was neither seen nor heard of by any one aboard the *Farallone*. He always returned on time, in clean clothes and apparently sober.

So he hadn't drawn the nickname Wild as a result of his wild debauches ashore. They called him Wild because of an eccentric streak he had every now and then.

One afternoon in Manila, when the sweltering heat was so intense that all work had to be knocked off and all that men did was lie about on deck beneath the awnings praying for a waft of breeze, Baldwin appeared on deck attired for the North Pole; he had on blues, a woolen jersey, peacoat with collar up, a watch-cap pulled down over his ears and woolen gloves. His face was as serious as that of a minister.

They all thought he was doing that for their amusement. The truth was, Baldwin was trying to sweat the alcohol poison out of his system. He'd just returned from a ten-day saturating.

Again, also in Manila Bay. One day Baldwin dived over the side, straight at a ten-foot shark. Not only that. He remained in the water, as if waiting for the shark, temporarily frightened away, to return—remained in the water till the officer of the deck, shouting through a megaphone from the quarter-deck, ordered him to "Get aboard!"

He was told by the officer of the deck to "Knock off such monkey work!" Baldwin didn't tell the officer of the deck that no monkey work had been intended; that he'd had a sudden impulse to commit suicide. Baldwin told very little.

Anyhow that's why they called him Wild.

He was an artist on the piano. The moment he began to play men dropped everything and came flocking about him. None of them could comprehend some of his music. It was wild and weird and unearthly. But they would listen, fascinated, as long as he would play.

SOMEWHERE along the road to Piti that morning Wild Baldwin managed to negotiate a very comfortable sober-jag. Six large gins and he was, at least temporarily, perfectly sober. Of course the effect of these would soon die out, and he'd be "pretty sick"—but not till after he'd got past the officer of the deck.

There was much of military snap in the

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way Baldwin stepped up the gangway and saluted, first the colors, then the officer of the deck.

"Returned aboard, sir," he said with a crispness of tone that was inspiring.

The officer of the deck returned his salute and took his furlough papers.

"Very well, Baldwin," he said.

And his tone, also the fact that he added the name, showed that he was pleased by the appearance of the returned tar.

Baldy had pulled it many a time. Six shots, the odor killed with a cup of thick coffee, and he shot through the official gates with colors fluttering. That morning, however, other eyes were on him—those of Captain Doone.

Baldy whirled as he heard his name called. But he whirled with so much of momentum that he overdid it. Instead of an about-face, he executed a complete roundabout-face, or two about-faces. This necessitated yet another about-face, or three in all. Nothing daunted, however, Baldy stepped briskly aft and came to a halt with heels clicking before the captain.

"Come below with me, lad," ordered the little skipper. "I'd like a talk with you."

Thirty seconds later Baldwin was standing before the captain down in the large, magnificent cabin. The captain sat at a table that was much littered with papers.

"Baldwin," he began, "in the three and a half years you've been in the Navy about how many sprees have you been on?"

It was a startler. For Baldy had never let any one in on his rumhousing. Those six large gins were saying to Baldy—

"Tell the old fool you never drink."

But something in the old fool's blue eyes said—

"Don't you do it!"

"Rather a hard question, sir," was Baldy's answer.

The captain blinked in amusement and stroked his iron-gray beard affectionately. Leaning forward, he folded his hands on the table.

"Baldwin, in looking over your enlistment record I find that you came into the Navy at the age of twenty-seven; that your former occupation was that of a song composer; that you had two years in college; that you came into the Navy because you thought you'd like the service; you have neither mother nor father; your next of kin is an uncle—and so on. All that's on your record. That's all perfectly O. K.

"But here's something that isn't on your record: About five years ago you composed the melody of a popular song. It brought you several thousand dollars in royalties."

Baldy was listening with that strained attentiveness that the alcoholic can affect when he has enough and not too many drinks under his coat. Let him sit down and give him a cigaret right then and Baldy would have sold Captain Doone the island of Guam.

"True. Quite true, sir," in a soft voice that bespoke culture and alcohol Baldy replied.

"On top of that," went on the captain, "you played the horses. You won. You set out for the fifty-thousand-dollar mark, and you *made* it. Further, you kept your word, and quit."

"In strictness I overshot it, sir. I——"

"And then—" the captain unfolded his hands and brought both fists down on the table with a bang—"of all the fools and jackasses allowed loose! You went on a wild spree that lasted two months! And you finished in the alcoholic ward of a city hospital!"

He paused.

"Broke," Baldy completed for him. "Quite broke, sir."

It's not easy to ruffle a man with six large gins under his belt, not to say a word of a bambooful of Guam toddy. And those drinks were running true to form. Baldy was a little surprized that the Old Man should have all this dope on him. But it takes more than that to make a man with steady nerves and perfect mental equilibrium quake. Moreover, a man so gloriously sober-drunk as Baldy was doesn't like to let the other fellow do all the talking.

"All of which is quite true, sir, save on one little point," he said with smooth, liquid enunciation. "It was fifty-two, not fifty, thousand dollars that I scattered between New York and San Francisco. As I remember——"

"Never mind, never mind," the captain checked him. "After you came out of the hospital you entered the Navy. Your idea was that the rigid discipline and strict requirements of the service would keep you straight, eh?"

Those drinks were saying to Baldy—

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"Ask him how the —— he knows what your idea was."

But Baldy answered—

"Well, yes, sir; that was one reason."

"And how long did the Navy keep you straight?"

"I didn't touch a drop for five months after I shipped."

"About as long as you ever held off, isn't it?"

"The longest, sir."

Here the skipper shot back into remoter parts of Baldy's life.

"You lived with your uncle. What was the hitch between you and him?"

"Music and business," Baldwin answered. "He wanted me to become an engineer. I wanted to stir nations with my melodies. We locked. The upshot was I quit him, quit college, and——"

He paused, grinning. "You know the rest, captain."

A long silence. Finally the captain spoke again.

"You were right. You knew better than he what God made you for. As for——"

"Why, captain, that old jazbo was like the Rock of Gib. to penetrate. He was——"

"—as for quitting college, you were wrong. You should have gone ahead and worked your way through to a finish, just to show——"

"—he was the rottenest——"

"—just to show him you could. But what I don't——"

"—the rottenest——"

"—what I don't understand, lad, is this: You had the will and character to quit the smooth water of the harbor and get out and buck the wind and tide and sea. You threw up a fine home and went out and did your own plowing. But where is that will and character today?"

The voices inside of him were again clamoring to be heard. But the captain's words had stirred something else in Wild Baldwin.

He had often asked himself that same question. He had been able to quit the luxuries of a fine home and stay quit. But why couldn't he quit booze and stay quit?

"You don't mean to stand there and tell me that a big, hale young fellow like you is going to let rum put him on the mat."

The captain pointed a shaking finger at him.

"You have not fooled me! You return from these ten-day furloughs apparently sober. But I know that trick of jolting yourself over the gangway with a few drinks. I've watched you.

"You're drunk now. Two hours from now you'll be weak and sick and shaky. You'll not be yourself for a week."

There was no denying it. Baldy knew the old boy had him cold. And despite those six gins he felt slightly uncomfortable.

"You're not one of those drinkers who can drink tonight and quit tomorrow. If you were you'd have quit before you splashed away fifty thousand dollars. You're one of those drinkers who shouldn't drink at all—not a drop.

"The point is, when are you going to make the last stand? One and all, lad, your class of drinkers finish in the same place—the gutter. Are you going to wait till you reel into the gutter before you knock off for good?"

A great trick of Old Man Rum's is that of squealing on himself. Those six gins now told Baldy to "go ahead, blather the whole works." His voice was now slightly husky.

"It's hard to explain, captain, to one who's never been up against it"—the way they all begin. "I don't believe, sir, that there's a periodical drunkard living who does not want to quit. When that initial impulse that sends him on a spree begins to crawl, he always fights it. He does not want to take that first drink. He knows what it will lead to. He remembers the last spree and all the suffering that followed it. Moreover, he *knows* that when he tells himself he'll go easy this time, he's only throwing the jazbo into himself. But he's depressed, and the only relief he knows is alcohol. And down he goes.

"It's hard to explain, sir. But the whole thing sifts down to this: There's a hump to get over. It is a tremendous hump! Getting over it entails a whole hellful of suffering.

"I know this: If I ever get over one whole year I'll never take another drop of the —— poison. But that'll be a hard hump to get over, sir."

"Do you think you'll ever get over it?"

"Well, sir, at least I often kid myself that I will."

Baldy grinned.

"I hope to; yes, sir."

After a long silence the captain spoke again. His tone was snappy.

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"Baldwin, you say you want to quit. If you got over a whole year you'd stay quit."

"Yes, sir."

"You have six months remaining on this enlistment?"

"Yes, sir; six months to do."

"Good."

The captain stood up. He was now the dignified, military Captain Doone, U. S. N.

"I'm going to help you over that hump. For the rest of your time in the Navy you're restricted to this ship. Do not try to get ashore.

"Go forward."

IT WAS not yet dinner-time. Baldy was curious to know. He went hunting for the captain's yeoman.

"Say, Roscoe," when he found the little chief yeoman on the topside, "where did the old man get all those past performances of mine?"

Roscoe looked him up and down.

"Come again, Baldy."

"Why—he just had me back there giving me my whole history. Told me about stunts I pulled before I shipped. He had everything straight, too. Where'd he get it all?"

"How should I know?" Roscoe replied. "I don't get in on all that's behind the old boy's ears."

"Come on, come on; dish up."

"I don't know a thing, I tell you!"

Baldwin's hands came up to his hips, and with head cocked to one side he stood looking the little chief over disappointedly.

"Is that the kind of a shipmate you are?"

Roscoe's black eyes shot fire.

"How the —— can I tell you what I don't know, you big ram!"

Baldy looked him over a few moments longer. Then he turned on his heel.

"Go to ——!" he flung over his shoulder.

"Same to you!" Roscoe flung after him.

It was Wednesday, a half-holiday in the Navy. Therefore Baldy needn't worry over duty today. He had a good eighteen-hour sleep ahead of him. He would need it. Once those six gins died out he'd be "pretty sick." They were still with him, however, and he had an appetite.

There was a good dinner on the board that day. Baldy stowed two plates of soup, three large slabs of steak, four helpings of mashed spuds, five ears of corn, nine slices of bread and three pieces of peach pie. He kept off the coffee because he wanted to get right to sleep.

After thus stuffing himself till he could stuff no more Baldy proceeded below to a quiet, remote part of the ship and stretched out on deck. Now for an eighteen-hour battle with those shapes and snakes and things terrible and horrible.

FOR three months Baldy kept telling himself he was glad he was restricted; that it was the best thing that could have happened to him. Six months of bone-dryness in the offing. A record stretch. Great stuff! It meant a big pay-day. He'd hit the outside with a big ticket—and clean.

No, sir! There would be no big splash in 'Frisco! Once over those six bunless months, he would go right on through many more bunless months. He was going over the hump. He was through with the —— poison!

The *Farallone* was a mover. In those three months she put in at Manila, Saigon, Hongkong and Vladivostok. In all these ports there was shore liberty. Baldy saw his shipmates go and come, heard them talk of the glorious sessions in this and that place—yet not once in those three months did he feel the itch to go. Nor did he weaken in his resolve. He was through with the —— poison, and that's all there was to it.

It was all right for these other fellows to drink, he told himself. But not for Wild Baldwin. They could handle it. He couldn't. His top-piece was differently made.

The end of those three months found Baldy at the peak—morally, mentally, physically. He was clear-eyed and clean. There was litheness and snap to his moves. He could always laugh. And the music he got out of that piano hypnotized his shipmates.

Just to make a good job of it he had quit cigarets.

Paymaster Dolby, commenting on him one day to Captain Doone, said:

"He's about two hundred per cent. efficiency, sir. He gets over more work in an hour than all the rest of my department does in a day."

Captain Doone smiled but shook his head.

"That's too much. I fear a slump. You

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can't run a motor above its rated horsepower, Dolby, without heating. The slowdown always follows. And the same with the human machine."

But another week, two, three, and there was no slump. Baldy remained in the pink of condition. He purposed, moreover, to continue remaining so. To hell with the corrosive stuff! He had that hump in sight. He had old Demon Rum by the tail. He had a knot tied in that tail.

The fourth month of Baldy's restriction rolled by. Then came that slump. Indeed Prophet Doone was a knower. Baldy began to smile more and more seldom. Soon he was rolling the cigarets again. And gradually he left off playing the piano for the boys.

The impulse to cut loose was back. Longings, live and wild, were crawling within Baldy's brain.

Scattering went all the ideals he had been trying to drum in on himself. He smoked more and more cigarets. He ate less and less. Nor did he put in as much time at his desk in the pay-office as he was supposed to. Listless, absent-minded, he roamed the decks, pretending to take an interest in this and that. But his mind was on just one thing—booze.

Here it was, crawling in his brain like a worm, the thing he had cursed and damned and sworn never to think of again.

Let a group of tars near him be talking of booze, and forthwith Baldy would cock his ears, swallow, roll a cigaret and become a fascinated listener. But let the conversation be on any other subject, and he'd move away impatiently.

He spent long periods, belly on the rail, dreaming of his beloved rum.

At night he'd lie in his hammock wide awake, goggling at the overhead bulkhead, and with much licking of chops and smacking of lips mediate the different brands of liquor he had drunk; try to recall to his tongue the flavor of this rye, that bourbon, and so on.

He could recall the taste of gin. Never had liked gin—tremendous kick though. Also the different brands of whisky came with a little concentration. The taste of champagne he had entirely forgotten; it had been so long since he had been able to buy it. Never had seen any sense in guzzling beer.

Past performances floated back. Returned those days and nights and days and nights when old boy Red Eye and he had gone round and round. There were bottles and bottles. Sleeps that were wakings and wakings that were sleeps. But always with oceans of booze at hand.

No use talking, but booze did mellow a man. He fancied a fellow would find life more worth while if he had a little of that stuff around all the time. Take a little jolt now and then—not get cocked, of course. That was the way. Yes, sir; it was necessary to a man's existence.

All this talk about his being an inebriate was hootnanny. He had been a —— fool, he'd admit. But what did that have to do with good whisky? Great Jovial Jupiter! He hadn't had a swipe in four months! Wasn't that proof enough that he could knock it off? Inebriate! Where did those jazbos get that kind of cheese? He'd bet right now he could go ashore, take five drinks—and stop.

But of course, all this was idle dreaming. He might as well put in for a million dollars as for a liberty. Old man Doone always meant what he said. But it was tough stuff to have two months to do.

Baldy's pay had not been stopped. On that pay-day he drew all he had on the books, which amounted to three hundred and sixteen dollars. He felt more comfortable with that roll in his sock.

But the gods offered little in the way of opportunity during that month. The *Farallone* kept moving like a streak, making nothing but flying stops. There was scarcely any shore liberty.

Then one day the big cruiser steamed into Yokohama, the word being that she would be there for three weeks, with liberty every night.

Baldy now had but one month left. He was anything but normal. He ate next to nothing; walked the decks at night. His smile was gone; he was uncommunicative. To ask him to play on the piano was only inviting a punch in the jaw. Grim, morose, silent and with a haunted look in his eyes, he just did get over his duties.

One thing and one thing only he must have—some booze. He cared not what it was—raw alcohol—anything—just so it had a tremendous kick and there was plenty of it. Let there be oceans of it! He felt he'd like to take a bath in raw alky.

This was a —— of a thing to do—cut a

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man right off short! Some people had about as much sense as— Oh, ——!

THE second day in Yokohama it was when Baldy observed "Frisky" Malone making ready for a beach-ward dash.

So far Baldy had fought it off. He hadn't as yet tried to get any liquor brought back.

He eased alongside the big water-tender.

"Say, Frisky," he whispered, "stick a couple of pints in your socks on your way back, will you?"

"Say, I'll do that little shtunt, me boy," Frisky responded. "Niver mind the money till I'm after bringin' the shtuff back in the mornin'."

Fine! Baldy set out in quest of another shore-bound tar.

"Shorty" Scott, the radio chief, came strutting along the gun-deck, all dazzled up for a dash.

"Why sure, I'll bring you back a quart. Oh, to —— with the money! Wait till I bring it back."

Nothing easier on that ship. Men returning from liberty were never searched—unless they were drunk, and then seldom.

Next came the quartet, the Farallone Four, their heads all together, humming as they walked a new one they were going to put over up in the British-American. Some harmonists these. They were "Solemn" Black, the lead; "Squeak" Wilson, tenor; "Blubber" Duncan, barry; and "Foghorn" Dawson, bass. And they could sing.

Sure! Absolutely! They'd bring back four quarts!

Baldy paused. That made six. There was a light in his eyes that was angelic. The only thing he had against himself now was that he hadn't done this before. He had thought of it. What an unmitigated jackass he'd been, to suffer through those days, weeks and months when he could have had a little stock on hand at all times! And thereat along swaggered two more prospective "runners."

Same good fortune. And as with the others they didn't have time to take the money. Just so, too, with all the others Baldy braced.

Baldy was happy. That evening he ate enough to put five men on their backs with violent gastric disturbances. After supper he played the piano for gobs as of old.

And, lying in his hammock that night, he smacked and smacked and licked and licked and gave free rein to his imagination. It was good to know a fellow had shipmates. Fine pals, these tars; big, wholesome in every way.

He'd like to see the look on old man Doone's face if he knew. Ah, if he knew that Baldy had sixteen big juicy quarts coming back to the ship tomorrow. Sixteen big fat quarts of brands various!

Of course, the old hooker meant all this for his own good. But the old hooker didn't understand; he knew nothing of the psychology of alcoholism. There he was ignorant. Ignorance was certainly ——. Sixteen quarts in the morning! And with that Baldy went to sleep and slept as only the happy can sleep.

Baldy was up with the bugle next morning. The deck-force stared open-mouthed, stupidly, when he came up on the forecastle and asked for a deck-scrubber. A yeoman first-class volunteering to help scrub decks was new stuff. It might be bad symptoms.

But Baldy seemed rational—more so than he had in a month. And at breakfast he stowed his five eggs and eight slices of bacon with the full gusto of a healthy man. That scrubbing decks, then, must be a good sign; perhaps Wild Baldwin was coming back to his normal, eccentric self.

After breakfast Baldy took his station aft on the gun-deck, just inside the door to the quarter-deck, where he could watch the gangway.

Shorty Scott and Frisky Malone, traveling in company, were the first of the delegated sixteen to return.

"By George, Baldy!"

Shorty paused, his expression one of acute contrition. Then very, very slowly—

"I—forgot—all—about—your—quart!"

Frisky's face looked as if he had accidentally killed his brother. He turned to Shorty.

"An' do yuh mind what I says las' night, just before we turrns in?"

Shorty turned to Baldy.

"We talked about it the last thing last night. It was the first thing we were to do this morning."

"Oh, well, don't take it so hard."

Baldy gave them an intelligent look.

"I've got fourteen more coming."

"Boy!" from Shorty. "You're set!"

"Say, shlip us a jolt after a while; will yuh, like a good boy?" pleaded Frisky.

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"I have the day's jooty below, an' I'm a little rocky from too minny las' night."

"Sure," promised Baldy. "But I've got to get aft and watch the gangway."

The quartet came aboard, staggering and lunging. Baldy had misgivings; they might be searched. But no; the officer of the deck checked them in and shooed them forward. Baldy nailed them as they filed through the door.

"Shhike ish, Bal'y, ol'-timer," began Foghorn Dawson deeply. "We'se all sho shlopped up, hic, 's 'fraid bring a' shing back."

"'S 'fraid offshur deck shearch ush," put in Squeak Wilson. "We're shorry. Oh my shorry how —— we are!"

And from Solemn Black: "'S ter'ble, hic, c'lam'ty, hic, Baldy, 'lboy. Wish I could give you half, hic, what I got inshide o' me."

Blubber Duncan said nothing. He merely threw both arms around Baldy's neck and wept copiously.

"Oh, go to ——, the whole gang of you!" exploded Baldy, tearing himself away.

A half-hour later Wild Baldwin stood aft on the gun-deck scratching the back of his neck, his well-made face eloquent of disappointment and perplexity. Four more tars had returned with nothing in their socks but their feet. Even "Shnopps" Horn, the most reliable booze-runner on the ship. All wore sorrowful faces and were profusely apologetic. Baldy's anticipated stock had now dwindled to six quarts.

At ten o'clock that morning Mr. Baldwin sat at his desk in the pay-office. On his face was an expression of divine intelligence. He was like unto a philosopher, deep in the profounds of abstruse logic. His forehead was fully an inch higher, and in his clear, hazel eyes glowed wisdom that was ages old.

Yes, sir! It was design, not chance! Sixteen forgotten quarts! Why, that overrode all chance and coincidence since the world began!

He went up on deck. One after another he met the quartet. Every one of them was sober.

So that was the old jazbo's game! Why, the old hooker had the entire crew against him!

He returned below to his desk and waxed busy on his typewriter.

After a while Baldy's machine stopped.

"To —— with the Old Man!" he blurted out. "I've only got another month to do. I wish he could see the splash I make in Frisco!"

THE *Farallone* was at Manila when Baldy's enlistment expired. Men can be discharged in Asiatic waters, but only on their own request and provided they agree to waive transportation to the United States. The usual course is to transfer short-timers to the receiving-ship at San Francisco in one of the trans-Pacific Army transports.

Baldy was a happy tar that day. Alongside the pier over in Manila was a big Army transport. She was scheduled to leave for San Francisco in five days, returning by way of Nagasaki, Japan, and Honolulu; and Baldy failed to see how he could lose out on going back.

They *had* to transfer him, he reasoned. He had fulfilled his agreement to Uncle Sam—overfulfilled it. As it was now he'd be a month overtime when he was paid off in Frisco. Indeed they had to transfer him. Old man Doone couldn't get away from it. Oh, he could—if he wanted to—hold a fellow. But no; Baldy didn't think the old jazbo would pull anything as rotten as that. Yes, sir; he was going out on this transport. And, serene in this conviction, he strutted about the desk all that day, pausing here and there at a shipmate's elbow to crow a bit.

"Hate like —— to make a man's palate itch," his chatter went, "but just try to picture your Uncle Jazbo in Nagasaki, when old John Transport hits there. They coal there, you know, and let the homeward-bounders slip ashore."

With which Baldy would lift a leg and out of his sock draw his fat wad, roll his eyes and lick his chops.

Throughout the day he kept it up.

That evening, little Roscoe slipped up to his elbow, right after Baldy had been thus popping off to a group on the topside. Roscoe took him to one side. Then in a low tone:

"Say, Baldy, old socks, I wouldn't gas off too much if I were you. You're not on that transport yet, you know."

Baldy turned on him, eyes blazing.

"I'm overtime! My cruise expired at nine this morning! And they've got to send me back!"

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Roscoe yawned.

"Well, if they've got to, I suppose they've got to," he replied. "But if I were you I'd go light on the gas till I got the dope I was going."

Thoughtful, Baldy watched him walk away. Roscoe was right. It was a fool's game to crow too soon. They *could* hold a man overtime. In fact they could do anything they wanted to in this outfit.

The band struck up on the quarter-deck. They were playing an operatic selection, "Rigoletto." Baldy listened and as they neared the finish eased aft. When they had finished he made his way through the jam of tars surrounding the band, up to the bandmaster.

"Say, jazbo," he addressed "Bandy," "where the —— did you ever get any such interpretation of that piece of music?"

Bandy, while he realized that Baldy was better educated musically than he was and welcomed his suggestions, didn't like to have them blurted out before all hands.

"I know my business, Baldy," he retorted.

"The —— you do! The way you slash that piece up must make the man who wrote it flop over in his box. Why not let the poor fellow rest?"

"Well," Bandy drawled, "I'm drawing the pay, Baldy."

"Yeah? Well, you're about ninety per cent. overpaid."

With which Baldy walked away. Having created a general ha-ha at Bandy's expense, he was satisfied. That settled a score between them. He had a few days before caught Bandy in the act of taking a swig from a bottle; and when he, Baldy, had reached out for it Bandy had thrown it out through a port.

Baldy's next two moves were forward and downward. He proceeded below to the fire-room—but not to shovel coal.

It was midnight when he came up from the fire-room. His undershirt was crammed with money. He had smashed a big crap game below; taken the last green dollar there was in the black gang.

He went into the radio office and counted it. He had twenty-eight hundred dollars. He licked his chops and said to "Slats" Withers, the radio operator on watch—

"Boy, just try to picture your Uncle Jazbo in Nagasaki, when old John Transport hits there."

The next morning Baldy grew itchy. No order had as yet come to the pay-office to close out his accounts to San Francisco. He waited till near noon. Then he went up to the executive's office, where he got the ear of the ship's writer—"Highflown" Bunts.

"Say, Highflown," he said, "how about it? Any dope here about my transfer?"

Highflown shook his head.

"Not yet. I understand, Baldy, that all the homeward-bounders go to the transport day after tomorrow."

Baldy felt relieved. He'd wait.

On the morning of that day after tomorrow the executive officer sent to the pay-office a list of the names of men who were to be transferred home and whose pay-accounts were to be closed out to the receiving-ship at San Francisco.

Baldy ran his eyes up and down that list. Then, hog-wild, he went tearing up to the executive's office. The executive officer was there.

"I rate going home, sir! My name is not on the list! Some mistake, sir!"

The executive shook his head.

"No. There's no mistake, Baldwin. The list was first submitted to the captain with your name on it. He scratched you."

"But I'm overtime, sir!"

"Yes, I know that."

Then impatiently:

"Suppose you go aft and talk to the captain about it. Tell him you have my permission to speak to him."

Aft went Baldy. He found Captain Doone pacing the quarter-deck, twiddling his thumbs behind him. Baldy hadn't spoken to the captain in six months—since the day he had returned from his last furlough at Guam with those last six gins under his coat. Baldy went right to the point.

"Captain, I request transfer to San Francisco on this transport."

There was a little more heat in his tone than Captain Doone was used to. And the little skipper replied in kind.

"Go forward."

"My enlistment is up, sir. I'm overtime."

"Go forward."

"Pay me off out here then, sir. I'll waive transportation."

"Go forward!"

Baldy went. Wild-eyed, he rambled the decks, muttering wrathful threats.

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"I know a Congressman! I'll fix that old jazbo! Watch me! I'll be the last man he'll hold overtime!"

That day Baldy wrote a long letter to a Congressman—one Daniel Doxie. Daniel Doxie, an eminent lawyer, had been his friend in the old days when he, Baldy, had rolled in the luxury of his uncle's stately home. Doxie would put the hooks to this old hooker. Doxie was he-stuff. Doxie wouldn't monkey around; he'd go right to the head of the works—the Secretary of the Navy. It took a Congressman to throw the jazbo into these naval officers.

THREE months later Baldy was still in the Navy. The ship was back in Apra Harbor, Guam. She was to be there about a month, so rumor went, while the engineer's force made boiler repairs.

One evening just after sundown Baldy was leaning belly on the rail glowering down upon the water when his gaze was arrested by a punt, made fast to the sea-ladder. There was an oar in the punt. Some seaman, cleaning the ship's side, had left it there. Chances were it would remain there overnight—maybe.

Pure association brought the idea. Baldy had been thinking of that bamboo shack of Enos', tucked away in the coconut valley over there, where he'd gone through his last saturating nine months before. A bamboo shack in the deeps of a wild valley where no one ever came—a punt with an oar in it moored to the sea-ladder—and what with his persistent luck at the crap games, Baldy now had over four thousand dollars in his money-belt—and there you have it.

He looked around. No one near but a marine. Nothing could be easier. All he need do was await darkness, then slip down the sea-ladder and scull for the beach.

He moved away from that spot for fear some boatswain's mate might on seeing him there get a hunch and remove the punt. He kept his eye on that punt, however, in a casual, disinterested way.

It was still there when the bugler sounded "hammocks." Baldy swung his hammock just to make it look good.

Daylight gave way to dusk, and dusk to darkness. Lights leaped into being over in Sumay, the little cluster of shacks off which the *Farallone* lay. With their searchlight the marines out on Orote Point began flashing signals across the bay to Cabriz Island. The mountains loomed black against the sky. It was cool, balmy. And the water of Apra Harbor was like glass.

At eight-thirty Baldy took another look over the rail. The clumsy, oblong boat still lay at the foot of the sea-ladder. That settled it. The punt was good for all night at the foot of that ladder.

"Like —— it is!" grinned Baldy.

Taps.

"Silence about the decks!" by the boatswain's mates.

Baldy shifted below and shifted from white into a suit of dark-blue dungaree.

He then went up on deck and sat down beneath the barbette of the forward turret, abreast of the sea-ladder, to wait till the late sleepers, promenading on the forecastle, cleared the deck. For he trusted not a soul on this ship.

"Too bright a moon and too many stars," he growled to himself. But he took consolation in that there were clouds riding by. Oh, he'd make it.

For months Baldy had stifled his imagination. Sitting there with his back to the turret, he now gave it free scope—for he was positive that it would all be fulfilled before dawn broke in the morning.

Myriad squarefaces rose up out of his rich well of imagery and paraded before him. He saw them marching up from Agaña, the capital of Guam, saw them marching up the radio-station road to the path that led down into Enos' valley. Down the valley they came, these thousands of squarefaces, down to where the growth was dense and where no one ever came but Enos and Wild Baldwin. A very river of gin from Agaña to Enos' shack.

He saw Enos' toddy-trees. Gin with toddy for a chaser. That was the stuff. He felt the glow, that glorious mellowing-up all over as his nerves leaped and tingled to those first few drinks—the first in nine months. It was a splendid feeling!

Drinks and drinks. He'd make it the grandest rumhousing of all his rumhouser life. Ten days? Ten ——! Catch him stopping at ten days—now! There would be no stop. Why, a man could hide out in that valley over there for a year. And he had over four thousand dollars. He smacked and licked and swallowed.

And if a fellow did eventually go broke

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he needn't worry about the drinks; not on an island where it grows in the trees.

An outlaw on the Island of Guam. The idea tickled him immensely. They'd have a great time finding him in that shack.

He waited and waited. There always had to be a few star-gazers, who must stay up and walk the deck. He wouldn't care if they understood astronomy!

The deck was clear at last. The night-walkers had all turned in.

Yet Baldy tarried, his glaring eyes on the moon and growls in his throat. Cloud after cloud moved across the sky, some coming close to the moon, some missing it by miles. He hardly dared chance it in the full glare of the moonlight. There were men sleeping on the forecastle. Some one might be awake.

He recalled the old saying about watching the coffee-pot, and for a full ten minutes he didn't look up.

When he did finally look up again, hope surged. A great bank of cloud was moving slowly down upon the moon. He closed one eye and gaged its line of direction. Couldn't miss it! And as he watched that cloud, hope ran higher and higher, for he noted that it gradually took on the shape of a squareface.

There it was—a signal from the gods, telling him to stand by!

It was eleven-thirty when that gigantic squareface covered the moon. Baldy stood up. It was now dark. Ratwise he slunk over to the rail, leaned over and peered down. The punt was still there; he could hear the *lap-lap-lap* of it bobbing up and down.

He lifted one leg over the rail. But only one. A hand gripped him by the collar, and a voice spoke in his ear.

"No you don't, Baldy."

It was a marine.

"What the ——'s the idea!" Baldy snarled.

"You don't want to do that," said the marine softly.

"How the —— do you know what I want to do! You leathernecks are too —— officious!"

"But that'd only make things worse for you, Baldy."

"Oh, go to ——!"

With which Baldy melted away aft in the darkness.

Baldy returned to that spot a couple of hours later. The punt was still there.

Again he got one leg over the rail and was pulled back by a leatherneck. This was not the same marine.

Another argument.

"Oh, go to ——!"

And again Baldy melted away.

He waited. At a quarter past four in the morning he made the last attempt to get over that rail. When this one was balked by the hand of yet another leatherneck Baldy went below, undressed and turned in his hammock.

One thing was clear now: The old man had him picketed. The marines were standing watch over him. So the idea of jumping ship went, along with the hope of having any liquor brought aboard.

And a continuous watch it was, as he learned the next day. There was always a leatherneck somewhere near him who moved where Baldy moved.

He called them watch-dogs, suckers, white mice.

But he had to admit that old man Doone was thorough.

WHEN the *Farallone* left Guam Baldy was four months overtime, or ten months without a swig. The big cruiser went to Nagasaki, Japan, coaled, then to Vladivostok, Siberia.

Up there Baldy received a reply from Daniel Doxie. The honorable one wrote that he was sorry, but could hardly interfere. There went his last hope. His last friend, the best friend he'd ever had, had quit him cold.

"To —— with 'em all!" was the way Baldy met the issue.

They were not friends anyway. Anybody was a man's friend when he was *up*.

From then on things looked bad for Baldy. He appeared a little "loose." Ever was he moving, moving, slithering about the decks as one with Saint Vitus' dance. What he ate would scarcely maintain life in a kitten. He lived on cigarets.

He quit duty; just quit, that was all. Nor was he called to account for it. For as Paymaster Dolby put it what use in having a man in the office who did nothing but bounce up and down in his chair and couldn't stay at his desk for five minutes at a stretch?

His nights were perennial periods of

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ups and downs. He kept the whole gun-deck awake with his grunts and growls, his bouncings up and down in his hammock and his tramping about the deck.

No one could get a word out of him. As well try to talk to a caged gorilla.

And in appearance he had changed. His eyes were those of a madman, with the skin bunched and wrinkled about them. There was a forward gorilla-like thrust to his head. He'd sprouted a shaggy brown beard through which his teeth showed whenever any one tried to talk to him. His shipmates gave him a wide berth.

An ordinary tar could no more get away with what Baldy did than he could take prussic acid and live. But Baldy was tabu. Captain Doone would listen to no charge against him. And Baldy had come to realize this; moreover, he was making the most of it.

Not only his job, and shaving, did he shirk. He shirked going to quarters, drills. He let his clothes go hang; cared not whether they were clean or crusty. Only a few with good memories were able to recall his last bath. He would do nothing.

If "Juggy" Clark, the chief master-at-arms, called him for being out of uniform, Baldy merely leered at him.

But wait. There was one thing Baldy would do. Shoot crap. And this to the sorrow of many of his shipmates. In his money-belt Baldy now had over six thousand dollars.

Over and over and volubly he swore that when he *did* get clear of the Navy he'd follow this —— ship to the end of —— to get old man Doone!

Time and again up there in Vladivostok he tried to jump ship; but a marine was always near by—and his bodyguard were wearing guns now. He offered them as high as a thousand dollars to let him slip ashore. And when they said him nay, he called them "—— watch-dogs, without even common decency, much less principle."

Not for five hundred dollars a quart could he get a man in that crew to bring him any liquor.

Captain Doone was making good his boast—

"My crew is a unit."

Every man on that ship but one was pulling with Captain Doone in his endeavor to save Wild Baldwin from himself.

Baldy had ceased to think of the hump. To —— with it. There was no such thing as a hump.

AFTER a month at Vladivostok the *Farallone* came down to Shanghai, China.

Baldy was making no further attempt to get booze nor to slip ashore. He'd got over his spasmodic jumps; seemed to be taking things easier. But he maintained his gorilla-like attitude toward every one. He now slouched about the decks slowly, pausing now and then to scratch a bite or to roll a cigaret.

Early one afternoon Captain Doone brought a civilian aboard. Instead of taking him to his cabin the captain escorted the stranger forward to the sick-bay. They passed Baldy, who was leaning against a stanchion on the gun-deck. He scratched a bite behind the ear as he glared after them.

"Wonder who the —— the old jazbo's got there," he growled to his marine guard, twenty feet away.

The man was tall, well-formed, dark, handsome. He had long, black hair, a heavy black mustache. So too were his eyebrows heavy and black, not to say his eyes, which were large and black. He was dressed in black.

Baldy rolled a cigaret.

"Wonder where the —— he picked that up," as with his tongue he swabbed the cigaret-paper.

Not often in these days could a man enjoy a word with Baldy. His bodyguard replied:

"Looks like one o' them artist guys; eh, Baldy?"

Baldy turned a scowl on him and said—

"Oh, go to ——!"

In a few minutes Captain Doone returned aft alone. Baldy remained leaning against the stanchion as he passed, inhaling deeply, his brow furrowed in thought. The captain said not a word to him for not snapping up to "attention."

About five minutes later a pharmacist's mate came along. He halted at a distance of twenty feet from Baldy, which was as near as any one would go to him unarmed.

"Hey, Baldy," he called, "you're wanted down in the sick-bay."

"What for?"

"Search me. Doc says to go an' git yuh. 'T's all I know."

"Wise jazbo, ain't you!" Baldy growled.

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Baldy then walked slowly forward. His hands were in the pockets of greasy dungaree pants with fringes at the bottoms. He was barefooted and bareheaded. The jumper he wore had once been white, but now it looked like khaki. He spat out his butt just before entering the sick-bay.

The tall, stylish gentleman with the black hair, eyes, mustache, arose, extended a smooth hand and in a deep vibrant voice said:

"I'm glad to know you, Mr. Baldwin. Phrenee is my name—Professor Phrenee."

Without any apparent hurry Baldy accepted the proffered hand, the while looking the stranger up and down with unconcealed suspicion. He said nothing.

Surgeon Jones turned to the three pharmacist's mates, goggling from the side lines, and shooed them out.

Baldy was invited to sit down. He was scratching his ribs as he did so.

The professor began talking. He was a hypnotist. At present he was engaged in curing dope-fiends. Had a small sanitarium here in the city. Captain Doone and he had met quite by chance the evening before, and the captain had got him interested in Mr. Baldwin's —ah—affliction. He, Professor Phrenee, had some years before cured many dipsomaniacs.

Baldy squinted him up and down as he talked. When he had finished, the inebriate scratched himself below the left armpit, then sat back, crossed his legs and yawned.

"Well, professor," he began after a while —when he got ready—"they've got an alcholic cure on this ship that beats hypnotism all to ——."

He laughed.

"It's what your hop-head calls straight cold turkey. They've kept me from booze, by making me a prisoner, for almost a year.

Here Baldy paused with abruptness. He blinked his eyes for a moment. Seemed he had been going to say a great deal more, but checked himself.

"As I told Captain Doone," the professor said, "I have no faith in forced cures. It must be left up to the patient——"

"Now you're throwing the jazbo!"

"—to cure himself. Give me a dope-fiend or an alcoholic who really *wants* to be cured and——"

"You've got one," Baldy broke in, looking the professor straight in the eyes.

The professor was taken aback by his abruptness. There was no doubting Baldy when he spoke straight out. And yet the professor hesitated. Captain Doone had told him that the man was obstinate, self-willed, and would not, he feared, be a good subject; therefore he had come aboard with anything but roseate anticipations.

Too, there was something in the inebriate's eyes that deterred him. He knew not what it was. They were large, clear eyes that looked straight at him, and yet with something in them that caused the professor to doubt the sincerity of the mind behind them.

"Mr. Baldwin," after a long silence, "in curing a habit through the medium of hypnotism everything hangs on this one thread—the patient must want to be cured. Captain Doone seemed to be under the impression that you——"

"Yes, I know," Baldy cut in. "He told you that he thought the minute they turned me loose I'd go right off on a bat. And he's *right!* I'd do it just for spite. And I'd do it where he could *see* me doing it. He never gave me a chance to fight the stuff myself. Why doesn't he let me go ashore? I go back there and try to talk to him, and all I get is 'Go forward.' "

Baldy bent forward.

"But between us, professor, I want to be cured."

Again that inscrutable something in Baldy's eyes. The professor, however, cast aside all doubt. He stood up.

"Very well, Mr. Baldwin. We'll try."

The professor put Baldy to sleep in just four minutes.

While he was under, Baldy was told that upon awakening he would immediately proceed to shave, take a bath and put on his liberty blues. He would take the next boat ashore.

First he would go into a saloon and with whatever shipmates he might meet take a few soft drinks. He would have absolutely no desire for an alcholic drink of any kind. After these few soft drinks he would hire an automobile and take a ride of a couple of hours. Then he would return to the ship.

In the eleven minutes he slept this was repeated to him several times. The professor then woke him up.

Baldy ran a dirty sleeve across his sleepy eyes. For a few minutes he sat there as one dazed. Finally he stood up.

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"Well, Baldwin, what's on?" Surgeon Jones asked him.

Baldy yawned.

"Why—I'm going to clean up and bump the beach."

"What for?"

"Oh, just a few drinks and an automobile ride."

He started for the door.

"Wait a minute, Baldwin. A few drinks of what?"

"Oh, ginger ale, lemonade—few soft drinks."

"Why not whisky or beer?"

Baldy shook his head.

"Nope. Alcohol in 'em. Don't care about any."

He went out. The professor turned a beaming face on Surgeon Jones.

"An excellent subject!" he exulted.

MAY 24 1919

FOR the first time in nearly a year Wild Baldwin stepped down the *Farallone's* gangway. He was clean, shaved, and wore a neat-fitting suit of tailor-made blues. Two chiefs—Frisky Malone and Juggy Clark—embarked in the launch with him.

He said very little on the way into the wharf. The coolies in their house-boats and sampans that crowded the Yangtse seemed to absorb his whole interest. As they neared the wharf he turned his attention to the buildings of Shanghai. He seemed to be thinking hard. Suddenly he turned to Frisky.

"Say, what saloon in this city handles the best soft drinks?"

Frisky grinned.

"That's not my language, me boy."

"We're heading for the Savoy, Baldy," Juggy spoke up. "That's a good place. Better steam along with us."

"All right," Baldy replied. "And after we have a few drinks will you fellows take a ride with me?"

"Say, we'll be after doin' that little shtunt; eh, Juggy?" said Frisky.

"I'm on," Juggy replied.

The launch bumped the wharf. Juggy and Frisky exchanged winks. About a hundred 'rickshaw men crowded about them as they disembarked. For a few minutes it was all they could do to stay on their feet. They finally managed, however, to emerge from the mob, each in a 'rickshaw.

Baldy's 'rickshaw led the procession of three up to the Savoy. They entered and stepped up to the bar. The American dollar is always good in Shanghai; therefore they hadn't bothered exchanging their money.

Juggy said beer, Frisky whisky, Baldy lemonade.

Baldy looked at the drinks of the other two with disgust.

"—— if I can see how a man can drink that junk," he said and turned to the bartender.

"Say, old scout, can you get us a car?"

"You bet."

The bartender was an American.

"Get us a chauffeur with savvy; some jazbo that can understand English."

They were having the third drink when the chauffeur arrived. He was a little Jap who spoke English fluently. He stood to one side waiting.

Baldy walked over and dropped a nickel in the piano. When it began to *plunk-plunk-plunk* he grabbed the little Jap chauffeur and commenced dancing with him.

The Jap couldn't dance; but Baldy managed to carry him around and while so doing also managed to say things in his ear. Also—and this was what rendered the Jap so keen of intellect—into the small yellow hand he held Baldy pressed a bill that was crisp.

This Jap had dealt with Americans before. He knew that the chances of this being a five-spot were good. He got Baldy's maneuver. He understood.

Juggy and Frisky, at the end of the bar, thought Baldy was merely giving the Jap details pertaining to the ride.

The piano stopped. Baldy let go of the Jap and walked up to the bar.

"We'll have another drink, then steam out on that ride," he announced. "I was just telling this jazbo there's a fine road leads out of this city somewhere. I forget. Say, seems like a —— of a while since I've been ashore. Must be two—three—four—five months at least."

He broke off and turned to the Jap.

"Better get your boat ready, jazbo."

Baldy waited till he heard the purr of the engine outside. Then a few seconds longer. Finally he lifted and drained his glass, then led the way out.

"Where's the car?" questioned Juggy when they reached the sidewalk.

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Now something happened—something neither of the chiefs was looking for. Up to that moment Baldy had run true to dope; he had done just what the officer of the deck had told them he'd do. But now the hypnotized man took the craziest of notions. Before either of them could stop him he went tearing up the street like a greyhound.

The two chiefs hesitated about three seconds, then followed. But Baldy was a speed demon. Nor was that all. A little ahead of Baldy, running slow, was a big touring-car.

Baldy overhauled that car and jumped aboard. And then the big car leaped ahead like some wild thing of life.

The two big fat chiefs stood in the middle of the street looking at each other sheepishly. No other car was in sight. Frisky spoke first.

"We're up ag'in' it now, Juggy, me boy."

Juggy took off his hat and threw it as far as he could. He cursed, waved his arms, pulled his hair.

"I've been a master-at-arms for twenty-two years," he bellowed, "and that's the first prisoner that ever slipped me!"

"Well, come on, come on, Juggy, me boy," grinned Frisky. "There's a crowd o' heathens gatherin'. They'll be shtickin' their knives in the backs of us. Let's be gittin' a couple o' bee-ers."

WILD BALDWIN stepped up the gangway a little before dark on the evening of that same day. With him were Solemn Black, Squeak Wilson Blubber Duncan and Foghorn Dawson.

The officer of the deck was flabbergasted. He looked Baldy up and down for a full minute without a word. Finally he turned to the Farallone Four.

"Did you men bring him back?"

Foghorn spoke for the Four.

"No, sir. He's bringing us back."

The officer of the deck didn't understand.

"I've brought these men back with me, sir," spoke up Baldy, "to testify to the captain as to my movements and conduct while ashore this afternoon. We'd like permission to speak to the captain, sir."

In five minutes the quintet were lined up before Captain Doone, down in the cabin.

The little skipper sat at that same paper-littered table with his hands folded before him. His gray hair was mussed. He looked tired. Yet he smiled. His attitude was that of a man who had lost, but, having done his best, was willing to grin.

"Well, Baldwin," he said in a voice that was tired too, "the hump wasn't inside of that year after all, was it?"

"Just barely, sir," Baldy replied. "I went over that hump this afternoon, captain."

"So? What made you jump arrest, lad?"

"I wasn't under arrest." Baldy smiled. "I was told to go ashore, have a few soft drinks, take an automobile ride and return. All of which I've done, sir. Nothing was said to me about being under the surveillance of anybody."

Captain Doone laughed.

"That's so," he said. "But you fooled us. You fooled Professor Phaenee."

He laughed again.

"However, all that aside. You drank no booze?"

Baldy waved at the four lined up beside him.

"I leave it to these jaz—fellows, sir."

Again Foghorn did the talking. Conversation was Foggie's hobby.

"Why, captain," he began deeply, "Baldwin picked us up in an automobile about three o'clock this afternoon over in the city. He asked us to take a ride with him. We drove away out into the country. We made several stops—probably eight or ten—in saloons. He drank nothing, sir, but ginger ale and lemonade."

Here Squeak Wilson needs must put his oar in.

"In one place, captain, Baldy orders a glass o' whisky, an' when he gets it he holds it up to his beezer an' sniffs at it, sir. An' then he dumps it on the floor, sir."

"I don't believe, sir," put in Solemn, "that Baldy'd take a drink for a million dollars."

The captain stood up.

"That'll do, you men. Go forward, all but Baldwin."

After they had filed out the captain and Baldy shook hands.

"I ran away from Clark and Malone, sir, because I wanted to prove to you that I was over the hump. I wanted to show you that I can step out alone and give Red Eye the cold stare. I got the idea this afternoon. I had some vague notions of what would follow that hypnotizing. So, like an ideal subject, I went right to sleep for the professor.

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"I could have got drunk a dozen times over. I had money enough with me to stay drunk indefinitely. But I didn't want any of the —— stuff, sir!"

Captain Doone paced back and forth across the cabin, running his fingers through his hair.

"I'm glad, I'm glad!" was all he could say for a while.

Finally he came to a halt at the table.

"A year ago, lad—when you were on that last furlough in Guam—I received a letter from Congressman Doxie, an old friend of yours. It was he who gave me your past performances. He wrote that he'd always taken an interest in you as a boy; that he was endeavoring to dissuade your uncle from disinheriting you, but that he could succeed in this only if he could convince your uncle that you had quit drinking. He asked my help

"And that, Baldwin, is what we've been trying to do—prevent you from getting yourself disinherited.

"You said you wanted to quit. You thought it would take a year. Very well; then a year it should be."

Baldy looked long and hard at the cabin deck. When he looked up his jaw was set, like that of a prize-fighter.

"Captain—I'm thankful to both you and Congressman Doxie. I'll never forget it."

His head and shoulders went back a little.

"But I don't want a nickel of that old jazbo's money, sir. That part of your endeavor miscarries. I wouldn't take a red copper of his. No, sir!

"The best part of it all, however, didn't miscarry. I got over the hump. That's all that matters. I can pull my own oar and get by anywhere now, because I'm clear of that —— poison!"

After a long silence the captain spoke.

"Well, lad, I suppose you want the next transport back."

"No, sir. I want to be paid off right here in Shanghai. I'll waive transportation."

"Very well. How about tomorrow morning?"

"No, sir. I'd like to be paid off this evening. Right now, sir."

Daddy Doone walked over to his desk and began pushing buttons.

"Very well, Baldwin," he smiled; "we'll pay you off with a big ticket—in one hour."

Baldy started for the door.

"What do you intend to do, lad?"

Baldy turned and replied—

"Bust the nation wide open, sir, with the biggest song melody that ever echoed from the Atlantic to the Pacific."

Slants on LIFE

by Bill Adams

The Great Gift

TO ME the best gift given to humanity by the higher gods was the gift of Friendship.

The word is sadly abused—abused perhaps as much as any word we have.

I have a friend who once wrote to me saying—

"Are you aware that there are not half a dozen men beside yourself whom I would call friend—it is too sacred a word to scatter broadcast."

I replied to him—

"Are you aware that the word friend is but the *word* used by men in an endeavor to express a great and beautiful gift—a jewel given to humanity by a higher Hand—a jewel thrown, I believe, broadcast upon the wide field of life, that it might sprout up everywhere in radiance—not a thing to be kept for a few men about one only?"

There is the trouble of it. We are too selfish with our friendships.

We have a way of seeking out men who like the things we like, and are incapable of taking hands whose owners do not see precisely with our own vision.

We need, it seems to me, to be able to step into the shoes of the other man; and be he rich or poor, learned or ignorant, to try to see just as he sees—else how shall we win to sympathy with him?

I am a very simple man who can never get enough of love out of life's turmoil.

"*The Great Gift*," *copyright, 1923, by Bill Adams*

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A MATTER of TITLE

An Incident in the Affairs of Mohamed Ali

by George E. Holt

Author of "Checkmate," "Pro Patria," etc.

UPON a certain morning it came about that Mohamed Ali, being somewhat tired of the narrow confines of the Riffian village in which he had found a haven, resolved upon making a journey to the house of his brother, Hassan ibn Ali, which was in the small settlement of Ain Hamra, not far from the city of El-Ksar-Kebir. He had not set eyes upon his fraternal relative since that occasion, many months before, when his brother had rescued him from the prison of Kaid Bargash and between them had substituted Bargash himself for the prisoner, whom the *kadi* was holding for ransom.

Although his brother's house was no more than a day's journey, Mohamed Ali, with substantial rewards offered for his head, had not been traveling much for recreation: only the cumulative effect of inactivity now drove him from his refuge. Or perhaps I am in error—it may have been that Allah had taken note of certain matters in the city of El-Ksar Kebir, and desired to make use of Mohamed Ali in plans which He had in mind. However that may be, the outlaw mounted his horse and rode forth from the hot little village with the sole thought that, unless he did so, he would very shortly break a *kesk'soo* bowl over some well-meaning head.

His journey was an uneventful one; he reached Ain Hamra in time to participate in the sunset prayers of his brother's household, and to thrust his fingers into the evening dish of steaming barley *kesk'soo*, with fragrant vegetables hidden in it, and a contented-looking roast chicken topping it off. During the long, leisurely meal, and the drinking of innumerable tiny cupfuls of mint-flavored tea, his ears were the receptacle of all the village gossip and a considerable amount of what might be termed metropolitan news, having to do with the town of El-Ksar Kebir.

"*Aiwa*, Mohamed, it is verily an accursed city!" Mohamed Ali's brother had his mouth full of *kesk'soo* and his mind full of many matters. "Not only is it drowned in Winter and burned in Summer, in accordance with the curse of Sidi ibn Yamin, but if there are dishonest, thieving officials of the government—and Allah knows there are aplenty—the worst is to be found in El-Ksar."

"Such, for example, brother, as——?"

"Such, for example, Mohamed, as that creature who was fathered by a maggot and mothered by a dunghill, he who is now an *adool* of the town and who calls himself Musa el-Shawi. A fine notary! And, also, for further example, his half-brother, Yusef el-Shawi, who is *kadi* of El-Ksar. A fine *adool* and a noble judge! 'Let me,' quoth the raven, 'guard your grain for you'!"

"But," objected Mohamed Ali, "is not the *kadi* our old friend——"

"Sidi el-Kewak has not been judge for a

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hundred days," his brother interrupted *him*. "In some manner—I know not how—this dog who now sits in the seat of justice, aided, no doubt, by the *adool*—who now may do as he pleases—caused the Sultan's displeasure to fall upon our friend, so that he gave up his office and now conducts a little shop for the sale of slippers. And then Sidi Yusef becomes *kadi*. *Kadi!* I know as much of law as he does—and I could not for the life of me tell whether or not the Koran forbids the killing of dishonest *kadis* and *adools*. Give ear, Mohamed——"

And, punctuating his remarks with a chicken-leg bone, he proceeded to tell his brother of some of the activities of the *kadi* and the *adool*.

Mohamed Ali listened without interruption until his brother paused for lack of breath.

"Hmph!" grunted Mohamed Ali then. "Do not excite yourself, brother. Is it not written in The Book that, '*his riches shall not profit him, neither that which he hath gained. He shall go down to be burned into flaming fire*'? Allah no doubt will attend to his affair when it shall please Him to do so."

"Allah is great," responded Hassan, but the slow shaking of his head indicated that he believed Him occasionally to be a little lax in His administration of earthly matters.

The following morning came additional evidence that the hands of the *kadi* and of the *adool* needed to be stayed.

Came an old woman, crying, to the house of Hassan, lamenting evil fortune and calling curses to rest upon the head of the *adool*. She was the widow of a cousin of Mohamed Ali and his brother, and the household first quieted her, then fed her, and then listened to a repetition of all the information she had given piecemeal during the process. And more.

Stripped to its skeleton it was a simple tale, and one which has been told in Morocco, and other places, a few millions of times. The widow, Aziza, owned a little piece of land left by her husband. Came one who desired to buy it. Consenting to sell, they had gone before the notary, who had written the transfer of title. The purchaser had thereupon put the title deed into his *shakarah*, thanked the *adool* and started off.

"But—my money," Aziza cried. "Where is the money for the land?"

"Do you mean that I have not paid you?" the buyer asked, in apparent surprize.

"Why—why—of course you have not paid me—as the *adool* here has seen."

She turned to the notary, but he shook his head.

"It was stated in the transfer of title that the money already had been paid."

"Paid! Paid! It has not been paid! And you read me nothing of that. Nothing! *Ail Ail* I am being cheated! You have robbed me!"

Her voice climbed to a scream, and passers-by stopped to stare. Whereupon the *adool* rose, closed the little shop, locked the door and walked with the buyer across the street and into the mosque.

No woman could follow him into those sacred precincts, wherefore Aziza had sought the *kadi* and laid her trouble upon the lap of justice. After much delay, the *adool* had appeared before the *kadi* and had repeated what he had said before. The *kadi* had sternly rebuked Aziza for trying to obtain payment twice for her property, and had bidden her begone lest he send for a *maghazni* and have her beaten. Thereupon Aziza, palsied with grief and rage, had come to tell the tale to her husband's cousin's family.

After the women had led her away to rest, Mohamed Ali and his brother Hassan sat for a little time in silence.

"I wasted breath when I spoke yesterday of the *adool* and the *kadi*. Now you may see for yourself."

Mohamed Ali rose and tightened his girdle.

"Hmph! When does our cousin Aisa return from Tangier?"

"Tomorrow, if Allah wills," replied Hassan.

"Good. In the meantime, let us see what counsel will come from deliberation."

And he went forth for a thoughtful stroll among the olive trees in a near-by grove.

UPON the following day returned Aisa, the cousin, from his journey to Tangier. Now Aisa was known as "the One-Eyed," from the fact that an enemy's thumb had once found an unprotected eye. That Aisa's knife had shortly thereafter ended his enemy's career had been some solace for the eternal bandage, which was necessary to conceal an unpleasant-looking eye-socket. Before the loss of

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his organ of vision, Aisa and Mohamed Ali had as much resembled each other as do two beans—a fact which had sometimes caused confusion in their affairs.

Very soon after his arrival, Hassan related to him the story of Aziza, whereupon Aisa, his one eye glittering, strode off to find Mohamed Ali and to inquire if such things were to be. He was very much of the opinion, personally, that they were not—and that the most effective and direct manner of preventing them was for him and Mohamed Ali to ride swiftly to El-Ksar and shoot the *kadi* and the *adool*. He requested that Mohamed Ali kill the *kadi*—he wanted the *adool* himself.

But, while Mohamed Ali smiled brightly at the suggestion, he was of another opinion.

"There is a better way, cousin," he said. "Now give heed."

And he fell to talking swiftly. As a result of which a messenger was shortly afterwards dispatched to bring to the village from El-Ksar one Achmed Dowhdi, who was very skilful with the pen. And, in the course of a few days, several other things took place.

In the city of El-Ksar two brown countrymen, one of whom wore a bandage which concealed his left eye, stood before the *adool* and awkwardly explained their business. One of them had named himself as Hassan—which was correct; the other called himself Aisa, which was not so correct, for Aisa himself was at that moment far away, establishing an alibi which later was to prove extremely embarrassing to the worthy *adool*.

"A pair of simpletons," said the *adool* to himself, looking disdainfully into the one eye which Mohamed Ali blinked stupidly at him, and into the stolid face of Mohamed Ali's brother Hassan. And:

"Then, if I understand, you, Aisa, desire to sell to you, Hassan, the garden of which this—" he tapped a white finger upon a scroll of what appeared to be ancient parchment—"is the title deed."

"*Aiwa, Sidi,*" agreed the countrymen in unison.

The *adool* unrolled the scroll and glanced through it. His face grew friendly, a valuable piece of land was described in the deed.

"You understand, Sidi," said Hassan, "we—we are not acquainted with how such matters are managed. Wherefore we thought that you——"

"*Ai,*" broke in the One-Eyed. "We had heard of the knowledge——"

"Assuredly! Assuredly!" The *adool* smiled gently. "All will be properly attended to. Wait now while I write. Do you read?"

"No, Sidi," answered Hassan. "We are but ignorant fellows. Only can we sign our names."

For a few moments the *adool's* bamboo pen scraped upon the parchment of the scroll. Then, at his request, the One-Eyed signed his name to what had been written. Mohamed Ali's hands were extremely awkward, and the signature required enough time to enable his eyes to run swiftly through that which the *adool* had written. The *adool* sanded the wet ink and re-rolled the parchment.

"That is all," he said, "except the fee; a small matter of—of twenty *reales*."

The One-Eyed fumbled in the worn leather *shakarak* which hung by a cotton cord about his neck, and slowly dropped the stated fee into the *adool's* fat, pink hand.

"*Baracalofric,*" the *adool* thanked him. "That is all."

He slipped the title deed into his own *shakarak*. In Morocco possession of title deed is *prima facie* evidence of ownership.

"But—but, Sidi! The title deed. It is now mine." Thus Hassan objected.

"You are stupid," answered the *adool*. "I have yet to—to do certain things with the deed, after which I will return it to you."

"But—but—it is mine, Sidi."

Now anger gathered upon the face of the *adool*.

"Begone! Begone!" he cried. "What do *you* know of the proper procedure? Go—before I summon a *maghazni* to take you."

"But—the paper! The paper!" still lamented Hassan.

Aisa seized the sleeve of his *djellaba* and made to draw him away.

"It is well. It is well, Hassan. This adool is an honest man, and no doubt, as he says, there are yet things to be done with the paper. Come away." Thus growled Mohamed Ali.

But Hassan seemingly was not to be influenced.

"No! By Allah, no!" he cried. "This is not right. I am a poor man, but I will have justice. The paper is mine, I have paid you for it. I shall go to the *kadi*. Yes—"

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He was shouting now—"I shall go to the *kadi*."

Now the little box-like shop where the judge squatted and dealt out injustice was not a hundred yards down the street, and to it Hassan stomped, audibly announcing his desire to obtain his title deed. Behind him shuffled Mohamed Ali, the One-Eyed. The *adool* for a space watched them with a cold eye; then, nodding his head as one who has reached a conclusion, he rose and shuffled after them.

The *adool* was a plump, brown-bearded, middle-aged man, but the *kadi* was an elderly, skinny rascal, with white beard and wrinkled face, nose like the beak of a predatory bird and eyes as kindly as gray ice. He smiled, very faintly, at the *adool*, over the heads of the complainants, as the notary approached. And, when Hassan paused for breath, he beckoned the *adool* to his side.

"I came, brother," murmured the *adool* instantly, "with respect to the matter of that little house of mine, which you desired to secure for your son. I find that I shall have no further use for it, wherefore it is yours—on the terms which—we understand."

"Good!" agreed the *kadi*. "It is just the place my son desires. And—have you ever before seen these people?"

He looked at the two countrymen.

"Assuredly," assented the *adool*. "From this one with the bandaged eye I have just purchased a garden. What do they here?"

"This other one," replied the *kadi*, "complains that you have—er—stolen the title deed to a garden which he has bought from the One-Eyed. And the One-Eyed says likewise."

"They are swindlers. From this one I bought the garden: I paid him for it and have his signed receipt—on the title deed. As you may see."

He extracted the deed from his *shakarah*, unrolled it, and held it under the *kadi's* nose.

"*Ai—ai—ail* It is a lie! It is a lie!" Thus Aisa and Hassan. "We have been robbed, Sidi. This *adool*——"

The *kadi* held up a warning hand: two *maghaznis*, government guards, appeared at the outcries.

"Take these men to the city gate and leave them," the *kadi* ordered the guards. And to Aisa and Hassan:

"I think you are rogues and thieves. However, I shall not punish you this time. But if you return to El-Ksar—or bother either the *adool* or myself again—it will be an action you will regret. Go!"

Apparently stupefied by this trick of fate, Hassan and the One-Eyed meekly shuffled away between the two guards.

"Now," said the *kadi* to the *adool*, "as concerns the matter of that house of yours——"

NOT many days thereafter came to the garden where the *adool's* servants were at work garnering the grain and fruits—for the garden was a large and valuable one—a gentleman who wore the milk-white *k'sa* of gentility, who rode a splendid horse, and who was followed by half a dozen stout retainers. His voice, when he spoke to the *adool's* men, made him seem very big, and made his retainers seem very big also.

"What," he roared, "are you doing upon my property?"

"What," roared his retainers, scowling blackly, "are you doing upon our master's property?"

And being only miserable fellows, whom no honest man would employ, the *adool's* men at once explained that they were gathering the grain and fruit in order that the *adool* might sell it for silver.

Swiftly then the visitor swung his horse about and rode off, followed by his servants. Swiftly they rode to the town of El-Ksar, not drawing rein until they had clattered through the gates and reached the place where the *kadi* sat dealing out injustice. A group of poor folk, involved in a case which was going very much against them, scattered as the horsemen approached. The *kadi* saw the newcomers, bit a word in two, and rose hastily to welcome the gentleman in the *k'sa* with deepest obeisance and most humble and flattering words.

"Send for the *adool*, your brother," growled the gentleman, openly wiping upon his white *k'sa* the hand which the *kadi* had kissed. "And lose no time."

The *kadi* made haste to send a messenger for his brother; but the affair was not to his liking. What had the *adool* done of sufficient importance to bring scowling to the place of justice His Excellency Sidi Achmed Alarbi es-Sanhadji, friend of the Sultan and governor of the province? A most unfriendly feeling for his brother began to take possession of the *kadi*.

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The *adool* came perspiring.

"By what right," roared the governor at him before the notary could get a look at the *kadi* to see what it was all about, "by what right do you claim the garden of Aisa, the One-Eyed?"

The *adool* bowed low, thrice—but combined his answer with his genuflexions: the Governor seemed to be in haste.

"By—by the right of purchase, from Aisa himself," he answered.

"And the title deed?"

"It is here, Your Excellency."

The *adool* took the title deed from his *shakarah* and offered it to the governor.

"Hmph!" grunted that dignitary. "Hmph!"

He looked at the *kadi*.

"You witnessed this transaction?" he asked.

"No—no—Your Excellency," the *kadi* made haste to deny. "I know nothing except——"

He bit quickly at the last word, but not soon enough.

"Except? Except? Speak, fool!"

"Yes, Your Excellency, yes. I meant to say that my knowledge of the affair was only that—that a man wearing a bandage over one eye, and calling himself Aisa, accompanied by another man of the country, one Hassan, came to me some days ago complaining against the *adool*. I listened attentively to their case, Your Excellency, and also summoned my brother, the notary. But, as you now see, he has the title deed to this property, and also a properly signed receipt from the seller for the money paid. All is according to the law."

"Hmph! Perhaps—perhaps."

Sanhadji cast an unpleasant look at the *adool*, who licked dry lips and tried to smile, but his face felt like a hard crust.

"And so—" He spoke again to the *kadi*—"And so, what did this imaginary Aisa the One-Eyed and his companion do then? It is an interesting tale—I would hear the rest of it."

"Then, oh Sidi, then—there was nothing more. They went away."

"Oh! They went away! Verily you lack imagination—for a *kadi*. Yes. A judge should have imaginatoin. I do not think you are a very good judge."

The *kadi* tried to find humor in the governor's words; if the Sidi desired to be humorous, let all laugh at his wit—but the effort hurt.

"This, then, is the tale you desire me to believe—the grounds upon which you—" he looked at the judge—"and you—" he looked at the *adool*—"have tried to secure possession of this garden. Listen, now—while I tell you both that it is all a lie. On the very day this paper—" he waved the *adool's* title deed—"is dated, Aisa the One-Eyed—oh, I know him well!—was at my house in El-Arache. All the day—from sunrise prayer until late at night. Therefore it is manifestly a lie that he was here in El-Ksar and sold a garden to the *adool*."

"But—Your Excellency——"

"And as for him having appeared before *you*—Sir *Kadi*—that also is an obvious lie. No—silence! I desire no more falsehoods."

From his *shakarah* the governor took a little rolled manuscript.

"This," he said, "is the title deed to Aisa's garden, which, on the same day, *I* bought from him in the city of El-Arache, where we both are known—somewhat. This—" he touched the *adool's* document—"is a forgery—a complete forgery except for the receipt and transfer written by you, Sir *Adool*. The signature is *not* that of Aisa the One-Eyed."

The eyes of the *adool* now protruded like shoe-buttons, and his face was a white mask of terror and amazement. The *kadi* was in little better form, inside—but he was an older hand at the business of pretense.

"I assure Your Excellency," said the *kadi* slowly, "upon my word as a judge, that this man—who calls himself Aisa the One-Eyed—was here——"

"Am I, then, a liar?" The governor's words were quiet—as a dagger is quiet. Truth was in him—but not the whole truth.

"No!" he continued. "I now perceive how the matter stands. I know, also, that you—" he looked into the staring eyes of the *adool*—"are no expert with the pen. Wherefore *you* did not forge this worthless title deed. But I also know——"

"Let me enter. I come at the governor's request," a voice interrupted—and a man with a bandaged eye entered the office.

"Ah, here is Aisa," exclaimed the governor; but there was no welcome from the *kadi* or the *adool*.

"Is this your signature?" asked the governor, pointing to the scrawl at the bottom of the *adool's* document.

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"Assuredly not," answered Aisa promptly. "What is this document—and why should you——?"

"Were you in this office on the day this paper was executed?"

"Again assuredly not, Your Excellency. Was I not in your house—yes; the very day I was in your house in El-Arache. Wherefore——"

"Wherefore these men are liars, without question. They allege that you were here."

"Allah knows that I could not have been, and was not," affirmed Aisa truthfully, but chuckling inwardly at his knowledge of Mohamed Ali's impersonation of Aisa the One-Eyed.

"Oh—the matter is quite clear. Lies! All lies! A shameful attempt to steal your garden, Aisa, by means of a forged deed."

"*My* garden? The one I sold to Your Excellency?"

"The same. Wherefore—I wonder who would make a good *kadi*—an honest *kadi*—of this town? Because assuredly there is to be a new one."

"There is he who was *kadi* before this one," said Aisa. "A good man. A man whom I long have known. An honest man."

"An honest man? Then shall we again make him judge, for honest men are rare."

THUS it came about that he who had been *kadi* and he who had been *adool* lay in an unpleasant prison in the town of El-Ksar, cursing a number of people, but most, perhaps, he whom they believed to be Aisa the One-Eyed. This did Mohamed Ali no harm, but it was injustice to Aisa, who *had* been at the house of the governor on the day stated. Also were their criticisms of the governor unwarranted. Because, of course, he was entirely unaware of the great resemblance—when one eye was covered by a bandage—which Mohamed Ali bore to Aisa, his cousin.

GUARANÍ BLOOD

by William R. Barbour

ARTICLES descriptive of Paraguay often state that the population of that country is largely a mixture of Spanish and Guaraní Indian. The reader gets the impression that real live Guaranís are still to be found in Paraguay.

While there are plenty of wild Indians in portions of the country, no living man ever saw a pure-blooded Guaraní. Inhabiting the fluvial and easily accessible sections, they were conquered and assimilated by the Spanish centuries ago, ceasing to exist as a separate people. While almost everyone in Paraguay, except recent comers, has some Guaraní blood, nobody has much of it.

Such being the case, it is amazing how the Guaraní dialect, features, and habits and characteristics have persisted. The desperately brave resistance Paraguay made against overwhelmingly large armies from Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, fighting till the male population was almost exterminated, is sufficient proof of the virility of the Guaraní strain.

The common people of Paraguay speak Guaraní more readily than Spanish, and nearly all place names are in that language.

It is a very simple tongue, with almost no verbs, few adjectives and adverbs, and a total vocabulary of less than eight hundred words. The only numerals are "one," "two," "three" and "four." For "five" one says "full hand," for "six," "full hand and one." Fire is *ta-tá*, water is *ee*, spelled in Spanish *i*. Big is *guazú*, whence *Iguazú*, the name of the stupendous cataract on the Paraguay-Brazil-Argentina frontier.

Oddly enough, the word jaguar is not Spanish and is seldom used by Spanish-Americans, who call the beast *tigre*. It comes from the Guaraní *yaguar-é*

Cleanliness was a virtue of the Guaranís. No matter how ragged and dilapidated a Paraguayan peon may be, his clothes and his person are clean. That he was not unskilled in certain artistic crafts is shown by the exquisite *ñanduty* lace, peculiar to Paraguay, the most sheer, cobwebby, delicately beautiful thing of its kind in all the world. The art of making it is unfortunately being lost.

A Paraguayan may well be proud of a strain of Guaraní blood. His red-skinned forebears have transmitted to him fine traits of courage and honesty.

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STANDISH of the STAR Y

A FIVE-PART STORY
PART III

by Gordon Young

Author of "On the Waterfront," "Oysthers," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

"STAY where you are. Situation here worse than ever. Really dangerous to come. Am writing you in detail —C. C. Renalds."

Norman Standish, back East after a trip abroad, perused his uncle's telegram and frowned. After his mother had died, leaving the Star Y ranch to his half-brother Bob and himself, he had decided to inquire how matters stood at Martinez. This was his answer. It took him two minutes to make up his mind. Arrived at Martinez he put up at the Davis's, as the one hotel had been called when Colonel Standish lived and Robert and Norman were boys. Quite inadvertently he learned from the bartender, Welch, that Renalds had acquired a black name in the town. Therefore Norman felt it would be best to conceal his identity a while longer and see what else he could discover.

In the barroom Norman listened as two "nesters" talked with Welch. His heart turned to ice as he heard that Robert had been found dead in the desert with a bullet-hole in his forehead. He also heard that Robert had been against Renalds' tactics at the Star Y and as a consequence nephew and uncle had had many quarrels.

"Who done it, you reckon?" asked the younger nester.

His tone implied that he had suspicions of his own.

"Who done it!" the bartender repeated contemptuously. "I allow that no man what's got half my sense, the which I ain't braggin' is overmuch, won't make no guesses out loud. Somebody seems to be doin' a ——'s plenty not more'n a hundred miles or so from here. But I ain't mentionin' of no names."

As he listened Norman heard that Renalds was waging a merciless warfare against the nesters who sought to make a living in his section. Renalds had gathered to the bosom of the Star Y a gang of hard-riding, reckless shooting cowboys who would stop at nothing.

That evening, Standish still having managed to conceal the fact that he was the sole owner of the Star Y, his uncle's ranch hands, headed by Harvey, the foreman, came in. They manifested much wary curiosity as to Standish's identity but he held them off until the appearance of Buck Blevins. Blevins, an untamed specimen, forced Standish into an argument. Just as the cowboy aimed a blow at the Easterner, Keyes, the telegraph operator, shouted:

"Buck—Buck Blevins! Don't! That's Renalds' nephew."

When Blevins had drawn back, abashed, Harvey stepped forward and questioned Standish. Then, when Standish admitted that he was Colonel Standish's son, the ranch foreman made arrangements for him to go out to the Star Y on the following morning. He also announced that Renalds was absent from the ranch on business.

Later, in the barroom, Standish heard of the disappearance of Old Sawyer, an old-time Westerner, who had been Colonel Standish's friend as well as Bob's, and no particular admirer of Renalds. There was much doubt over the fact that Sawyer was still alive.

THE next morning Simmons, the cowboy dedicated to the job of seeing Standish safely out to the Star Y, appeared. Through a ruse Simmons and the blacksmith, "Blackie," pretended that the horse Standish was to ride was unbroken. Sensing the hoax, and his pride hurt, Standish forced the horse into a wild frenzy, and was thrown. He won the respect of the two men when he insisted on riding the horse to the Star Y, after the animal had again quieted.

AS THEY rode along and Simmons became more communicative, Standish learned something of the relationship between "Red" Allister and Black Renalds. It seemed that when Renalds had agreed to operate the Star Y for Standish's mother until

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Bob and himself were of age, Renalds had been forced to leave his own property, the 44 Circle. During his absence he had installed Allister as his foreman and, as Simmons pointed out, with his tongue in his cheek—there had been a notable decrease in the size of the Star Y stock, and a corresponding increase in the 44 Circle's since this arrangement.

What interested Standish more than anything, however, was the fact that "Fuzzy" Butler, the man generally thought to have been Bob Standish's murderer, was a tool of Allister's. Then too, as Simmons pointed out, Allister had been no friend of Bob Standish's.

On the way to the Star Y, Simmons and Standish stopped off for a while at Reddin's road-house. Here Standish found a black horse tethered and apparently the property of one "Buckaroo," a reckless individual, inside. While they were resting Standish inadvertently learned that the horse belonged to McCullough, a neighboring rancher. With the help of Simmons, Standish secured control of the horse, intending to return it.

At Reddin's he also met a consumptive youth named Barney. Barney had known Bob Standish and confided to Standish that Renalds with the aid of Allister was driving the nesters out of the territory by illegal means.

As they were leaving Reddin's, Standish and Simmons were fired upon by the disgruntled Buckaroo and his companion. After a short exchange of pistol shots the two rustlers were killed, but not before Barney was also fatally injured. Before they left, Standish heard from Reddin that Frazier, a nester, had been burned out by unknown men. Standish was indignant, and Simmons tried to soothe him.

"Well," said Standish, "you can go on to the ranch if you like. I—I am going to Frazier's."

They found the Frazier family with no property left but a few provisions and a covered wagon, but stanch in their determination not to be driven out. The family consisted of Frazier, his wife, Wally their son, and a sweet-faced adopted daughter, Jess. "Maw" Frazier told Standish that his brother had been a friend of theirs, and then proceeded to enlighten him further as to the high-handed methods of Renalds and Allister. When Standish left he promised to send them relief.

ARRIVED at the Star Y, Standish was approached by a reckless youth named Bud Russell, who had been Bob Standish's best friend. He said that not only had Fuzzy Butler been responsible for the shooting of Bob Standish, but that Butler had also paid for his crime. He declined to discuss the particulars of the case for the present.

Trouble developed when Harvey, the Star Y foreman, refused to obey all of Standish's instructions. Harvey announced his opinion frankly.

"Young man, at first I took a likin' to you. But I haven't any now."

"I haven't any dislike of you at all, Mr. Harvey. But I am going to have my way in the management of this ranch. Do you still refuse to tell me who burned out Frazier's?"

"I do."

Finding he could do nothing with the foreman, Standish set the matter aside for the present and gave orders for Buck Blevins to be dispatched with relief to the Frazier household, as well as Mrs. Welch, in Martinez.

It was becoming evident every day that trouble was developing, not only with the nesters but the rustlers as well. A few days after Standish's arrival several bullets sped into Star Y territory.

THE next morning one of the men who had been standing guard at Turges Cañon came bounding into the ranch with the news that early the evening before one of the rustlers had broken out of the cañon and dashed off, heading south. They had given chase in the starlight, but there was no catching him. They thought they had recognized the horse he was on as Inkdrop, which had been Bob Standish's favorite.

The men who were at home, "busting" horses for the round-up, with Harvey and Norman, took to their saddles.

They picked up the rustler's trail and followed it easily enough for some ten miles, then it turned off toward the mountains, climbed rocky ground and was lost.

"He jest come up here to make us lose them tracks," said Simmons.

"Then if we skirt the mountain on farther south we ought to be able to find the tracks again where he took to the sage," Norman suggested.

"But maybe we bettern't find him. He might be a nester," said a voice, ironically.

Norman looked quickly around, but he couldn't tell which of several men might have said it.

"It is one thing," Simmons explained, "to foller a track out there in the sand and brush. It's another thing, the which is more onlikely, to find them tracks if you don't know where to look."

"There ain't no doubt about it," said a man called Travers. "That rustler's hidin' out with them nesters. I bet he's one of 'em."

Fom the high ground where they then were they could see far out across the land. Ameco Mountain of itself formed an angle of the mountain range that came out on the plains like a great horn, and well up in the bend of that horn squatters had planted themselves.

"That there is McCullough's," said Simmons, pointing to a dot of green. "An' the houses over there—see 'em? They been comin' in this Spring an' Summer. An' there's goin' be a big round-up in the bend this Fall."

Harvey looked at Simmons sharply.

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There was some talk among them of riding over to make inquiries among the nesters about the rustlers; but they knew that the nesters would lie most stubbornly to help anybody that was troubling the cowmen, and if they did venture over in the colony shots would probably be exchanged. The cowboys would not have cared much about this, but Norman was with them.

Harvey decided that they would go back up to Turges Cañon, camp for the night, and keep guard in case any other rustlers tried to get out; then, in the morning they would ride up the cañon a little way and see what they could find. It would be a risky thing to do, for one or two armed men could hold the cañon against all comers.

Late that night eight men rode into camp and fell upon the grub. Then being tired, all but two, who were left on watch, rolled into the blankets of the four men who had been keeping guard when the rustler broke out, and slept. Every two hours the guard was changed; Norman being aroused at three o'clock to go on watch with Simmons.

The air was chilly.

"What's the good o' all this here watchin'?" Simmons grumbled, rolling a cigaret as he stopped his horse beside Norman's. "We ain't a-goin' a-be attack, an' there ain't no cows a-goin' be run passed when them rustlers knows we're here. Harvey he usual has good sense, too."

"I suppose he isn't taking any chances. He feels that being in charge while Mr. Renalds is away——"

"That's plumb it. Mr. Renalds he won't take kindly to the loss of no cows, an' them hosses—he likes good hosses the same as your father. Say——"

Simmons stiffened alertly. Pause.

"Didn't you hear somethin' jest then?"

"No. What was it?"

"I don't know."

The night was clear and bright with stars. A dying moon hung so high in the heavens that the sun would find her there, trying to shine in the day time. But the landscape was covered with shadows, and things not far off had blurred outlines.

The earth before the cañon, and far out from it, had been cut into by the flood-water poured out by the Winter rains; and these deep arroyos were like the beds of many little rivers running side by side.

Simmons listened for a long time, then—

" 'Pears to me now an' then I hear a hoss."

There were several horses picketed near the camp.

"I haven't heard a thing."

"Seems out there, like. Maybe that feller is tryin' to make it back."

"I hear nothing," said Norman, after listening intently.

"I can't hear it now. I don't hear it no time steady. But now an' then—there—hear it?"

"Sounded like a bit of gravel sliding down."

"Yes, but gravel usual sleeps sound o' nights. It ain't like people an' go tossin' around from bad dreams. Something has got down in one of them arroyers."

They listened again for a long time, then Simmons declared that he heard the sound again; and said:

"Now you go wake them fellers up. They'll cuss. But kick 'em in the ribs. It's goin' a-be daylight here all of a sudden anyhow. An' I know I heard a hoss over there, comin' up this way toward the cañon. Them arroyers are worser than a labyrinth."

Norman more than half-suspected Simmons of wanting to play a joke on either him or the sleeping men, who would be sure to express their feelings fluently to Norman—even though he owned ten ranches—if they were roused out for no reason but a skittish imagination. So he asked—

"Why can't we go look first, and make sure?"

"You an' me couldn't head that feller off—not if he's on Inkdrop. Your brother used to outride ever'thing on him; an' while I don't allow that this feller is no such horseman as your brother, we ain't on no such hosses as Inkdrop, neither. I ain't heard nothin' for a minute or two. But you go wake them fellers up anyhow. I don't like the way Travers is a-snorin'. It makes me env'ous. It's goin' be light in a minute or two. An' ride slow, so if this feller is a-watchin', he won't get suspicious-like of a sudden, an' bolt."

Norman would not have gone, for he had heard nothing that sounded like a horse's steps, but at that moment Slim pulled his rifle from the scabbard and edged his horse into a slow walk, moving up toward the mouth of the cañon. Over the top of the mountains there was a shimmer of light, showing that presently dawn would come with a rush.

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Norman dismounted and moving among the inert forms, with a touch and a word, brought them into life.

"Slim thinks the rustler is heading back this way!"

The men one after another sat up, took a quick look all round, kicked off the blankets, hastily drew on their boots and chaps, and went stumbling for the picketed horses.

Before the saddles were cinched, light flooded the landscape; and Simmons began shooting.

A rider on a black horse was scrambling up out of an arroyo not a hundred yards from Simmons, and went bound on bound along the narrow ridge between two deep washes. The rustler had evidently walked his horse almost noiselessly up the arroyo and so got between the guard and the cañon.

Now his horse was running on a narrow ridge of gravel. There were deep gullies to cross before he reached the deep, pebbly bed that led to the rocky floor of the cañon.

The men swung upon their horses and rode after him. Simmons was in the lead until his horse hit the gravel crust of an arroyo, scrambled desperately, but went sliding down. A moment later when he had pawed up and out, Harvey was in the lead.

Inkdrop seemed to take the gullies like a bird. He sprang with a long-reaching bound, and hit with feet bunched for another leap. Simmons cursed in grudging admiration of the rustler's horsemanship. The cowboys, riding furiously, whanged at him with rifles. Norman afterwards reflected that if any of them had possessed the presence of mind to stop, dismount, and shoot across the saddle, then the rustler would have had small chance of not being hit.

As he made the cañon he turned around, and waved a taunting hand. Either by design or accident the handkerchief about his neck was up against his face, concealing his features.

Then he went thundering through the rocky defile—with Harvey after him, and the others followed.

The floor of the cañon was rocky and twisted from angle to angle, and in places where water seeped from springs, slippery. But they rode on, trusting to the horses, leaping boulders, feeling the horses slip on loose, smooth rocks and with the electric scrambling of cow-ponies regain footing and plunge ahead, hardly pausing.

Harvey knew that farther along the cañon floor grew steep, and though passable, it would slow down any rider. There would be the chance of getting in some good shots when the rustler had to slow down and climb—if he did not stop, dodge behind a rock and begin the shooting.

On they went, risking their necks at every jump.

Then from far up the cañon's side a rifle cracked, and Harvey's horse went down. Harvey, badly jolted, dragged his rifle from the scabbard under the dead horse, and got behind a rock. But before this was done there was a second shot and Simmons' horse went down, and Simmons was pitched headlong into the pool of a cold spring, from which he scrambled with much expressive comment as he too took shelter. The next horseman reined back suddenly, and though in plain sight was not shot at.

"Plumb queer," said Simmons, speaking across to Harvey.

"He's not goin' to get off any easier for jest shootin' hosses!" said Harvey.

"No wonder ol' Sawyer never come back," said a third cowboy who had crept in, "if they got somebody up there that can shoot like that!"

They could hear the horse of the rustler scrambling on ahead, and occasionally the fellow gave a triumphant whoop that rang through the cañon walls.

"A whole nest of 'em," said Simmons.

"They must be nesters, thinkin' to git even up with us," said another man.

"What about it Harvey?" asked Simmons. "We ain't never goin' git him out by stickin' here. We'd have to climb plumb over the mountain. Bob Standish he knowed these mountains, an' old Sawyer; but I don't allow there're many of us that'd know where we was goin' if we started to climb over around and in back o' this here cañon."

"I reckon you're right," said Harvey slowly.

Norman crept in beside Simmons. The other men, having dismounted out of sight behind a bend in the cañon, were scattered about in the rocks, waiting for a shot. But they saw nothing except the occasional puff of smoke as a bullet flattened on a near-by rock. But no man was hit.

Simmons set his hat on the rifle's muzzle

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and lifted it higher and higher—then a bullet tore through the crown.

"Jest what I thought," said Simmons to Harvey. "He ain't shootin' at *us*. He waited till he saw I wasn't under that hat."

"It beats me," said Harvey.

"Here too," added another man. "All the rustlers ever I had dealin's with shot to kill."

They lay there watching and talking for two or three hours, but not once caught sight of any one.

"It ain't no good stayin' here thisaway," said some one.

Simmons, at first warily, then openly, uncinched his saddle from the dead horse and packed it back with him, and was not shot at. Harvey did the same.

And so they left the cañon.

Harvey was exasperated and puzzled, but silent. He left four men on guard, as before, borrowed a horse from one of them and rode home, saying nothing to any one on the way.

XX

A FEW days later Norman rode into the ranch late in the afternoon.

He was tired and felt uncertain of himself; he knew what he wanted to do, and that he was not afraid—except of making mistakes.

This day he had ridden by himself over to McCullough's.

The day before he had visited the Fraziers again. Maw Frazier had said that "he was jest like Bob," which was the highest praise she had.

Somehow or other, as if the wind carried the news, the country knew about the Fraziers and his visits. Every one appeared to know that he had given Frazier an order on the Emporium for lumber and had sent a team and men from the hay ranch to help Frazier until he was on his feet again. But people said it was Jess Frazier that moved him to such consideration for the nesters.

Jess was a pretty half-wild, shy child, barbarously ungrammatical in speech and sweetly refined in feature. Norman knew that he was interested in her, she was so different from others of the nester tribes, but he knew that his interest was not sentimental.

Today he had gone to McCullough's. From McCullough's south to the Santee Divide there were many cow-outfits, the largest being Renalds' 44 Circle; but from the time Renalds had taken charge of the Star Y he appeared to have treated the two ranges as one.

Norman learned that word had been passed to McCullough, and those near him, to move—and move before Fall. There had been threats and warnings before, but this time the notices were in writing and mysteriously stuck on fence-posts. Besides, down in the Santee country the nesters were being burned out. Every one knew that McCullough would not move without a fight.

Norman hotly resented the attempt of other people to clear the Standish range of nesters. He resented any threat toward McCullough, who had been a favorite with his father and taken up the land at Colonel Standish's suggestion.

If he could merely have had his wish he certainly would have had the range free of nesters; but to burn homes to drive them out—no! The very thought gave him a chill.

He had wanted to talk over matters with old McCullough, whose advice he felt would be good, whose honesty was above question.

He had found two rawboned farmers, lean, brown, in home-made trousers, each wearing one rawhide strip across his shoulder for suspenders. They had rifles in their hands.

"Mac ain't here," one of them said.

The other eyed him unfavorably and chewed steadily on a jawful of tobacco.

"Miss McCullough?"

"She ain't here, neither."

"Bud Russell—where will I find him?"

"He ain't here, neither."

The other spat, shifted his rifle and spoke:

"Stranger, ye air too durn cur'ous. Be a-ridin'!"

"I am not a stranger. I am Norman Standish, and McCullough was a good friend to my father."

The farmers eyed him from expressionless faces; then the tobacco-chewer spoke again:

"Wall, he ain't no good friend to you or yer ——ed ol' uncle. An' we-all ain't got sech purty gals as Frazier—an' we don't want 'em makin' up to no durned cowman, nuther!"

"You miserable louts!" Norman shouted,

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feeling himself grow red of face. "You tell McCullough I was here and that I want to see him."

"We'll tell Mac whatever we durned like," the tobacco-chewer answered; and, raising his rifle, added—"Now ride, durn ye, an' ride fast!"

Norman was unarmed. He reined his horse around and made off, for the moment in a mood to set about hanging and burning out nesters himself. But, though without feeling the less angry, he realized that these ignorant fellows knew no better manners, and of no other way to protect themselves. There had been killings and burnings down in the Santee country, and open war was steadily moving north toward Ameco Bend. For that part of the range, McCullough's was the nesters' stronghold, and the nesters were standing together, practically under arms.

Norman learned afterwards that at the time he had called McCullough was riding from one family to another, urging them to stand fast and join with him.

When Norman returned home, no one was in sight. Matheson, the barn boss, had gone to the cook-house for an early supper. Barn bosses had a way of getting far enough on the good side of the cook to eat before the regular meal, and to get dainties. It was about the only compensation for the "farmer" job.

As Norman walked toward the men's quarters with the intention of leaving word for Harvey to call at the house when he came in, he again began wondering why nothing had been heard from his uncle.

About three weeks had gone since he arrived at Martinez; and Harvey had telegraphed that night about rustlers, and mentioned Norman's arrival. About a week later Norman had also sent a telegram to the address which Harvey gave at Kansas City. Twice men had gone into town to see if there was news; and a Mexican boy was now in Martinez with instructions to stay there until a telegram, or Renalds himself, came. Buck Blevins had not returned to the ranch, nor had anything been heard of him.

Norman went to the bunk-house, but it was empty. In the kitchen of the cook-house he found Matheson eating supper.

"——'s shore broke loose ag'in while you was away," he said to Norman, speaking through a mouthful of fried potatoes and tenderloin. "In this here country she don't sprinkle but she pours."

"Now what has happened?"

"Wall sir, them rustlers what has been holed up there in the cañon done come out this mornin'—least one of 'em did."

"And got away again?"

"Shore. He more than jest got away. He *stole* the hosses of the guard Harvey's got up there!"

"No! He couldn't have done that!"

"Wait till you see how far between their legs them fellers is a-carryin' their tails. They ain't ever goin' look a white man in the face till that rustler he is hung, the which may take some little time yit."

"But how on earth could it have happened?"

"Travers he come a-limpin' in here this mornin' after you rode off, him on foot an' boilin' pizen like a rattler in a hair-rope. There were three o' them on guard, an' six hosses. Travers he was on guard, settin' up on hossback, havin' a dream I reckon, an' five of the hosses was hobbled. Each man kept a hoss picketed till he had stood his watch, then put hobbles on him an' turned 'im loose. They was doin' four-hour watches.

"Wall they was all asleep but Travers, an' him not much awake I reckon. That rustler he must a-sneaked out like an Indian an' cut them hobbles, then sneaked back an' got to his own hoss.

"The first thing Travers knowed, jest a-fore sun-up, that *hombre* comes out o' the cañon. He turns sharp to the north instead of south, like before, with Travers a yellin' an' bangin' away, an' headin' after him.

"Waal, all Travers knows is that somewhere from the rocks as he is goin' by that rustler's pardner opens up an' kills another hoss, the which Travers was a-ridin', an' Travers he lands some twenty feet farther on, an' comes down a-settin' on his own neck. Then the rustler rides for them hosses which has wandered some from the camp, rounds 'em up and heads 'em off north instead o' south, pleasant-like a-waving of his hand to them fellers back in camp what are a-cussin' an' a-shootin', with him too far off to care.

"Them fellers looked high an' low among the rocks there off to one side o' the cañon, but they don't find hair, hide n'r hoofmark o' that other rustler who is plumb death on hosses.

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"It shore beats me. Harvey he pulled out o' here with what boys he could git an' swore he weren't a-comin' back without them hosses an' a rustler's ears to nail to the corral gate-post."

"We'll go to the cañon and get them out if it takes an army!" said Norman angrily. "It's preposterous. Two or three cattle thieves standing off an outfit like this for weeks. No wonder the nesters are coming in. There are no good men left in the country."

The barn boss sliced off another two-inch square of tenderloin, bit it a couple of times, rubbed the end of his nose doubtfully, and spoke again:

"Them nesters ain't comin' in no more. They're goin' out. Three houses more down on the Santee has been burned, an' I hear several folks got hurt a little. The round-up is movin' down on the Santee, an' headin' this way."

"You mean the round-up has started? I thought it didn't start till next week?"

Matheson nearly choked over his beef and potatoes:

"All the Santee country is shippin' out o' Martinez this year. Ain't you heard? That's why they're startin' a little early. Jeff Jones stopped here today to say 'Howdy' and borrer a hoss in place o' his'n. He's ridin' by. He's one o' Allister's men—all the same outfit, y'know. Allister an' your uncle is sorta pardners."

Norman's fist jangled the table.

"Don't you ever say that again. Allister and Renalds may be pardners. I don't know anything about their business. But Allister has nothing to say about the Star Y—nor Renalds either!"

The barn boss gaped blankly, then lowered his eyes and began to fill his opened mouth; but as Norman went out his eyes followed him.

"Cookie," said the barn boss, "was he tryin' to call me a liar do you reckon? He's shore plumb queer. I think he's some loco."

Norman had hardly reached the house before he heard the sound of a running horse. He went to the door and looked out. A lithe, slender form flung itself from the saddle and stumbled in awkward haste up the veranda steps.

It was Julio, the Mexican boy who had been waiting in Martinez.

He saluted Norman with Latin courtesy, smiled shyly and handed him a telegram.

It was from his uncle and sent from New York:

Came on here to see you. Telegrams forwarded by mail. Be advised in everything by Harvey and Allister. Leave here the twelfth.

C. C. Renalds.

Norman looked at the telegram a long time, not rereading, but simply staring. He presently noticed that Julio still stood before him, hat in hand, apparently with something more to say.

"What is it, Julio?"

"Señora Welch she say may the Virgin bless you. The little ones grow fat, señor, and do not cry. An' the Eastbound train, last night it was held up ten miles from the town an' twenty thousan' in gold it was taken from the express car. One man in the car he was killed when he say he do not know how to open the safe. The other train man he then open it. In Martinez everybody is much excitement."

"No clues?"

Julio returned a puzzled stare.

"Have they any idea who did it?"

Julio shook his head a little, then quickly, softly—

"Señora Welch say to George that Murtone is a no-good train man, and he is not in Martinez for two days now!"

The next day Harvey and his men returned, bringing with them the horses, which they had found scattered miles apart, but nothing was seen of the rustler, who, either as a joke or to hide his trail the better, had scattered the horses.

XXI

THE Fall round-up was starting.

Norman would have liked to go, but he decided that the wisest thing for him was to be in Martinez to meet his uncle and talk with him before any one else.

But for days Norman had increasingly sensed that something was in the air besides a round-up; something that he was sure had to do with nesters. Two or three times he had gathered hints that the round-up in the Santee country had been on for some time, but when he asked direct questions he learned nothing except that maybe the men down there—some of them—had started a little early because they were shipping out of Martinez this year. That was unusual, even strange, for it was

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much farther to Martinez than the railroad town from which the Santee cowmen usually shipped their stock.

Of late the men had grown more and more constrained when he came near them. He had seen them looking at one another with secret understanding, overheard strangely accented remarks about—

"I reckon the old range she'll be plumb cleaned up when we git through this Fall." And—

"Allister, he's shore goin' do this job right!"

He had noticed that they often talked together with quiet seriousness instead of with sober-faced bantering. Something was up. He could get nothing out of Simmons or Harvey. Harvey had grown even more silent. It appeared that he was thinking over something more than rustlers or Norman's interference.

It was now very well known that a party of 44 Circle boys had ridden down on Fraziers, and burned them out: that meant Red Allister's men had come on the range where Harvey was in charge and handled the nester situation. It was said that Red Allister collected ten cows from Renalds for every nester he drove out.

In the old days the Star Y had carried nearly a hundred riders on its payroll from the Spring round-up until that in the Fall was over. The regular men were mostly line riders, two to a house or shack of some kind, placed near water holes, or windmills, some ten or fifteen miles apart. Each day these rode out in opposite directions, observed conditions, turned back the cattle if they were going off the range. In the Summer the line riders had been pretty busy keeping cattle from working into the mountains.

Times had changed. Simmons had said that Star Y did not have more than forty men in the saddle now.

There was no doubt, either, that the Star Y held more range than it needed, but held it and often by force; and particularly rich basins where the water was near the surface and afforded fine feed when all about was dry.

An odd situation had developed in this cow country through some of the cattlemen experimenting with alfalfa; but being cattlemen, and not having gone into it with Colonel Standish's thoroughness, nor having his resources, they were not only unsuccessful but contemptuous of themselves for trying it, and so more resentful toward nesters who came in as if to show them how to grow hay. But just the same, in an ironical way, the nesters were encouraged to come because when the feed was needed, cattlemen would pocket their pride and buy it at good prices.

But nevertheless, the feeling was strong among cattlemen that the nester should go, because nesters surely would crowd out cattle, and it was better to have a few hundred starve than thousands driven from their range.

Norman sat on his horse and watched the men leaving for the round-up.

A bunch of nearly three hundred and fifty horses were headed south, followed by three cowboys, who rode slowly, alert to bound ahead and turn back any pony that might try to jump across the prairie and so get out of work. Behind them came the chuck-wagon, with food, bedding, extra ropes and sundry equipment. Another wagon followed on the cook's wagon tracks, carrying more bedding and equipment.

Behind them went some thirty men, riding slowly, sitting lazily, rolling cigarets and passing careless words amid the jingle of spurs and bridle-chains. They could join up with the round-up off the tip of Ameco Mountain. Already some eight or ten men had been sent down into the Santee county to work with other outfits where Star Y cattle was to be found off its range. These cattle would be cut out, gathered into herds, thrown back on their proper range, and the beef steers brought up toward Martinez.

Ameco Mountain struck out as sharply as a child's block on the carpet, and its protruding angle, running some seven miles out on the plains, had come to be used as the southern boundary of the Standish range. All on the far side and back of the Ameco Range was still cow country, and the cattlemen meant to keep it so. But from Ameco Point straight south for a hundred miles to the Santee River nesters had come in, and if not discouraged, would of course work up close to the Ameco Range.

Off Ameco Point a dozen outfits—the 44 Circle being by far the largest—would gather, with some three hundred men, more than three thousand horses, and they would circle into vast herds thousands upon thousands

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of cattle, like a migration of nomads, moving from one unknown country into another.

Norman very much wanted to be there, but his uncle was coming in a few days, and wisdom suggested that he go to Martinez. Harvey had very strongly urged this, and Simmons, too.

The next day it was quiet about the ranch. Norman went for a ride, heading in the general direction of Turges Cañon; and when out of sight of any one, as he had been doing for many days, he practiced drawing quickly and shooting.

Norman knew that he was a fair shot, but he had been made modest by stories of his brother's incredible marksmanship.

"Bob he shore was a good hand with a gun. He burnt a lot o' powder jest keepin' his hand in. But he was shore fast. Three outa five he could hit a jack—him ridin' ——-for-leather, an' the rabbit touchin' ground ever' few minutes."

After trying to do the same thing, Norman began to discredit the story, though he recalled that even as a child he had heard the men brag of Bob's shooting.

A coyote swept up out of a hollow and passed him at an easy trot, running with head turned backwards. Norman emptied his revolver. The coyote did not seem to mind, but trotted off some distance, faced about, squatted down and stuck out his tongue, very much as if laughing.

Norman prodded out the shells and reloaded, then put his horse to a gallop; but the coyote shook some real speed out of his legs and was soon far off, and Norman quit the chase.

Then he came over a hill and drew rein suddenly. Far ahead in the shallow valley, moving toward the mountains, was a small bunch of cattle traveling in a straggling line, unhurriedly, but followed by a horseman. This man appeared so unconcerned —riding with a leg across the horn, and not at all looking about him—that Norman could hardly get it into his mind that this must be the rustler.

He was not heading straight for the cañon, but following the valley, which, Norman reflected, was just what a careful rustler would do, the better to keep out of sight. He had swept up some twelve or fourteen head, and showed by the direction he was taking that he knew the range and that the men who had been keeping watch at the cañon had been taken away to the round-up.

Norman gave a quick look all around. The rustler was alone. No one else was in sight.

He rode back, far down the hill so that the throbbing beat of his horse's hoofs would not be heard, then spurred ahead to get abreast of the cattle before he came over the bridge, bore down on the rider and asked questions. No one, he felt, had a better right to ask them: they were his cattle.

He rode hard for about a half an hour, then came to an opening into the valley. He waited. The cattle came on, straggling along, pausing to crop, moving slowly.

Norman took a position as much out of sight as possible. The rustler would pass within a hundred yards or less of him. He drew his gun and waited. He could hear the fellow singing, stopping the song now and then with a good-natured shout at the cattle that paused too long at a tuft of dried grass.

"Be a-movin'! Be a-movin', you sons of guns!"

Norman felt that he should know that voice. There was something familiar in the tone. Then the man came into sight.

"Bud Russell," Norman shouted, "up with your hands!"

Russell gave a startled look, then his horse leaped, and made for the opposite hill with scrambling bounds.

Norman shot at once. Russell drew his gun and kept looking over his shoulder, but he was looking all about to see who else was coming after him.

Suddenly Russell reined up, leaped off, and standing on the far side of his horse rested his arm, gun in hand, across the saddle. Norman thought himself the next thing to a dead man, and pulled up, .45 advanced to shoot it out; but Russell shouted:

"Howdy, Mr. Standish. Ride up an' let 's talk."

"You confounded scoundrel! Drop that gun. I've got you covered!"

"Shore you have," said Russell with an easy tone and impudent grin, his own gun still leveled. "Which I allow ain't very friendly in you."

"Drop that gun I tell you. I'll shoot!"

"Now don't go doin' nothin' reckless, Mr. Standish," said Russell with tormenting friendliness. "You see, my gun it ain't

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got no trigger spring. I'm holdin' back the hammer with my thumb, an' if somethin' should happen to make my thumb slip—why, Mr. Standish, the danged thing would go off."

Norman, angry as he was, could not shoot a man who talked that way; besides, he saw that Russell was in a much safer position than he, and that Russell did not want to shoot. He lowered his gun and rode closer, demanding:

"What d' you mean, stealing Star Y cattle?"

"Me? Stealin'?" exclaimed Russell, also lowering his gun, but remaining on the safe side of the horse. "You are all wrong, Mr. Standish. I ain't stealin'. Me an' another feller has just sorta gone in parder-ship with you—same as Red Allister has!"

"Same as— What do you mean, Russell?" Norman shouted angrily.

"Me an' another feller has located a big valley some mile back yonder"— he pointed toward the mountains, but without taking his watchful eyes off Norman—"that we are ca'culatin' to stock up with a couple thousand head. It's some hard to get into our valley, but it is shore one fine place for cows. An' you don't seem none to care who takes 'em, or how many, so me and this feller—I'm jest sort a-workin' for *him*—thought we'd go into business with you, like Red Allister."

"Now see here, Russell, you stop trying to be funny. You are a —— rustler—but what do you mean about Allister?"

"I mean," said Russell, "that if you was to ride over to Ameco Point tomorrow or the next day, when the cattle are bunched, you'd find Star Y cows bein' drove into a 'slide' corral and comin' out with a Lazy A burned on their hides. Cows them are what'll calve in the spring. An' you'll find Star Y cows bein' drove down on to the 44 Circle Range.

"Me an' the feller I'm workin' with, we don't change no brands. We're jest findin' a new range for Star Y cows. An' I bet if you was to go over an' have a talk with Allister that you'd come back—that is if you could git back—an' help me drive off your own cows. We got water, grass, an' some timber over there, an' nobody can't git in, the which we don't want in. Today I'm jest ridin' in to bear some int'restin' news, so I picked up some cows on the way. If you want to come with me I'll show you where it is. I'll show you the feller I'm workin' for. You'll like him."

And Russell grinned.

"Are you trying to tell me that Allister is stealing cattle, right in the midst of a round-up? You know it can't be done."

"Who said 'stealin'? I said he was a brandin' 'em in a slide corral. Stealin'? I'm not stealin', either. You an' me are jest pardners."

Russell grinned provokingly, but remained watchful.

A "slide" corral was one with a funnel-shaped passage so that only one cow could pass out at a time. Bars could be thrust before and behind the animal, holding it fast while a branding iron was pushed against its hide from outside of the slide. This was used only in changing the brand of full-grown cattle, which were much too heavy to be dragged to the fire, as calves were in the Spring.

"He must have some kind of arrangement with my uncle," said Norman.

"I reckon so. Yore brother he used to think there was some queer arrangement too, the which is that the Star Y is goin' to —— and the 44 Circle is gittin' bigger an' bigger. When your father was alive it weren't nothin' to brand from ten to fifteen calves of a Spring. Feeds been good, and your hay ranch—though 44 Circles has been Winter feedin' there too—has burned stacks jest to git 'em out o' the way at times; but last Spring, you didn't brand four thousand calves. Maybe nesters et 'em."

"You mean that Red Allister brands Star Y cattle as his own at every round-up?"

"I shore do. An' one reason Red had fellers shootin' at Bob this summer was cause Bob had said Red wasn't goin' brand no Star Y cows this Fall unless he could show a bill o' sale."

"But Renalds—that isn't like my uncle!"

"Your uncle told Bob himself that anybody that could take Star Y cows an' git away with them was welcome to 'em. Now—" Russell's gun flashed into sight—"that's jest what I'm doin' at the present time. So jest drop that piece o' hardware you are holdin' 'cause I have to be on my way with these here cows!"

Norman hesitated.

"I'll shore shoot your arm if you don't drop it—an' I shore don't want to hurt you none, Mr. Standish. I like you plumb fine."

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Norman dropped the gun, saying:

"I think you're a liar from first to last, and nothing but a dirty cattle-thief!"

"Well, them's strong words for a little boy to be a-usin', but you're young yit, an' you'll learn. You jest come along with me if you like, an' I'll take you to a feller who'll explain better than the which I've done."

"No."

"Well then you turn that hoss around an' trot over to Ameco Point an' see what's happenin'. Maybe you won't think so hard of me. I hear as Allister claims ten cows for ever' nester he's burned out—an' that he'll collect for them Fraziers. That is, if Harvey don't step in an' do somethin'. Harvey's plumbed peevish about Red doin' his work that way."

Norman reined sharply around to ride off, but Russell called:

"Jest a word yit, Mr. Standish. You'll tell ever'body I 'spose as how you caught me rustlin', but I wish as how you wouldn't ——"

Norman faced about in blank astonishment.

"—I don't give a —— about myself; but they'll be suspectin' Mac, an' Mac is as square a man as ever throwed a leg over a hoss. He ain't got no more to do with my little goin's-on than—than you have with Allister's. If Mac had been workin' for the Star Y, Allister would have been hung long ago. It was over Allister that Mac an' your uncle had their fallin' out. I'm sort a-workin' for Mac on the side, but ain't got nothin' to do——"

Norman did not remain to hear more. He rode off. After a time he glanced back. Russell was again following the cattle, riding lazily, not in the least troubled.

Norman rode rapidly to the ranch. He was boiling with hot thoughts. He felt that no one regarded him as more than an inconsequential person, who happened to be Renalds' nephew. He was humiliated and on fire from Bud Russell's impudence; and he recalled the barely polite indifference with which any of his instructions were received on the ranch. He was the sole owner of the Star Y, and he determined to be its manager.

Riding into the barn he called—

"Matheson!"

The barn boss did not answer. Norman unsaddled and led his horse out to the corral, pausing at the water-trough. It was nearly empty. It did not matter much for there was water in the pasture, where many fine horses, mostly mares of too good a stock to be used for the rough round-up work, remained. As he was coming out of the barn he looked about with critical scrutiny, trying to find something out of place.

Norman walked to the cook-house. The barn boss, cigaret in mouth, was sitting astraddle his chair in the kitchen, leaning with folded arms on the back, joking with the Mexican boy who was cooking for him and waiting for his supper.

Norman remained at the door and spoke with coldness:

"First thing in the morning get up the two best horses in the pasture. Have Julio take one of them into town, saddled, and wait there for Mr. Renalds. Send the buckboard in, too.

"And you might show a little more care about the barn. There's a halter on the ground, and the corral-trough is about empty."

"There ain't been no wind all afternoon. I had her set to pump, but the wind it didn't come up."

"Then pump it yourself. And you had better do it now."

The barn boss stared, spat out his cigaret, got up and started out.

"And," concluded Norman, "when the men come back from the round-up, you can eat with them—at their table."

Matheson went on.

Norman turned and went to the ranch house. He was a little flush, half-ashamed of himself for having jumped the crippled barn boss; but he had begun his program of running the ranch from top to bottom. He was not going into Martinez to meet his uncle who was due in two or three days. He was going over to Ameco Point and see whether or not Red Allister was branding Star Y cows.

XXII

ABOUT the middle of the following day, Norman, who had been riding steadily toward a thin haze of dust that filled the distance before him like a slow burning and spreading fire, stopped on rising ground and, leaning elbow to saddle-horn, sat staring, a little puzzled and greatly thrilled. Before him were cattle, thousands upon thousands of cattle, with

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far away horsemen, seeming no larger than pigmies on toy ponies, galloping about.

"Where did they come from?" he asked himself; then, more mystified: "What are they doing here?"

It was incredible. The Star Y round-up had just started on the morning before, and here was a wide-spread herd that looked like one of the great drives he had seen a time or two as a child when cattle were being pushed by the tens of thousands from a far southern range to some northern state. And this herd was on the move, coming from around Ameco Point, entering the Bend, leaving its trail on the Standish range, moving up toward where McCullough had fenced himself in.

The herd was spread out for miles. Those farthest away were merged in the dust so that he could distinguish nothing but a vague movement—less than a movement, nothing but the drifting haze from under their countless feet.

"Those fellows from the south are stealing the Standish range—moving everything right on it. They've brought the cattle up from the Santee country!"

He said that to himself, but he could not believe it. He simply had to give himself some sort of explanation, and he could think of nothing else.

He spurred ahead toward where he saw a party of cowboys strung out in a wide semi-circle. He got near to one of the men on a Cross Diamond horse (the Cross Diamond outfit had headquarters over a hundred miles away) and shouted at him.

The fellow jerked back his reins. The horse had been going at full speed, but stopped with three short, stiff-legged bounds, not much more than twenty feet from where he had felt the bit.

"What's going on here?" asked Norman.

The Cross Diamond man, in less than a glance, had looked over Norman's horse and brand, and then eying him steadily, said gravely—

"We're all out here a-pickin' huckleberries."

Norman's answer surprized him. It came from behind the point of a gun:

"None of your ——ed nonsense. I asked a civil question and I want an answer."

"Waal," answered the fellow slowly, after a quick glance around and being relieved to find that nobody was close enough to see his predicament, "Waal Mr. Standish, I reckon as how you kin have any answer you want. Now jest what was it you made some inquiries about?"

Norman, without moving his eyes, thrust the gun back into its holster.

"Why are all these cattle being moved on the Standish range."

"So you *air* Mr. Standish! I thunked it. Waal, them was orders, Mr. Standish."

"Whose orders?"

"The boss o' this here drive."

"Who is he?"

"Red Allister."

"Where can I find him?"

"I reckon I don't know. I ca'calate he ain't asleep, an' when a man ain't asleep he moves around some considerable at a round-up, Mr. Standish."

"Whose cattle are all these?"

"I reckon you could find a lot o' brands there."

"What are they doing here?"

"Waal, we've jest about got the beef cut from the border up. An' if you want to know more'n that, you kin ask the men that owns 'em. They ain't none of 'em been stole, an' if I was a young man, new to this here country, I wouldn't be none too handy with that gun you-all air totin'. This wall-eyed hoss an' me al'us has an argument when he's rode, so I tied my gun in this mornin'. Some fellers is ridin' hosses that don't pitch none."

"Where is the slide-corral off the Point?"

The man regarded Norman for a time, then—

"About three mile southwest o' here, over at Three Trees."

"Thank you," said Norman, and rode on, now convinced that there was an astounding plot on foot to steal the Standish range.

He tried to think it out, but nothing suggested itself that was worth considering, for he could not believe that Harvey would have silently agreed to such a thing, and Harvey must have known of it. All the men had known of it. He recalled how they had acted when he had talked of the round-up, and how their answers had been vague, secretive, evasive.

He rode on, passing close to the great herd. Men that rode at its edges looked at him, some of them curiously, evidently guessing who he was by the horse, its brand, his youth, and the fact that in spite of his clothes he looked new to the country.

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Here and there he paused long enough to ask, first, where he could find Red Allister, then for the Three Trees corral.

He rode forward. Still the great herd came on, spread out thinly, bellowing anxiously, moving slowly with tossing heads and eyes rolling uneasily. The pad of hoofs on the ground, broken and softened by the prints of those that had gone ahead, was like the fall of rain when at the first of a storm large drops fall thickly on dust, but through that soft sound there was the crackling snap of ankle joints and sharp click of hoofs on pebbles; and they moved through a fog of dust that drifted upwards, visible for twenty miles.

Along a narrow fringe of growth by the sandy bed of a now dry stream, Norman saw a group of three tall cottonwood trees, near them a corral. Close to the corral was a chuck-wagon, and men were about, two or three on horseback holding a small bunch of cattle, one was perched on top of the corral, two others were busily stooping and rising at a small fire that gave off very little smoke. As he came nearer he saw these men by the fire repeatedly stand up, turn to the corral, thrust something between the posts. A moment after this was done a cow came bounding out, and was run by the horseman across to the small herd.

At the chuck-wagon the cook was gathering up the chips from the noonday fire into a big pan. Under the wagon was swung, hammock-wise, the skin of a cow to hold the meager fuel.

Norman rode up. The men were working hurriedly. No one paid much attention to him. He looked about. All these men were strangers. Their horses were 44 Circle horses. The cows that came out carried a vented Star Y and a new Lazy A.

He rode up to the branding fire.

"Is Allister here?"

"Don't know where Red is—he was here about an hour 'fore dinner."

The man scarcely glanced up as he spoke, but took a hot iron from the fire and turned to the corral-slide.

There were some twenty cows left in the corral, which was made of posts and rawhide, with a man on horseback inside herding them toward the funnel end.

"Is Harvey about?"

"No," said the man, jamming the iron through the slide.

A cow bellowed. There was the sharp sizzle of burned hair and hide.

"Twenty dollars!" called out the man who had just placed the brand.

"Sixty-three!" answered the tally man, a bronzed fellow with a long mustache, from his seat on top of the corral.

"You was askin' for Harvey," said the man, shoving the iron into the coals and selecting another. "We ain't seen nothin' o' Harvey this trip yit."

"Then what the —— are you branding Star Y cows for!"

The man straightened up, opening his mouth and letting it stay open. The tally man peered down. Two other fellows looked up, and the horsemen at the mouth of the slide rode in closer. The cook dropped his pan and faced about.

"It's come!" said the cook enigmatically.

"Who in —— are you?" demanded the tally man.

"Standish of the Star Y!"

And as Norman answered his gun came out.

"That Eastern kid!" exclaimed the cook, making the guess that enlightened everybody.

Norman had been talked of in all the cow camps from Bald Rock to the Santee River.

"Well, you'd better put up that gun 'fore it goes off an' scares you!" said the cowboy on horseback, a slim, fierce-eyed man.

"Easy Tom, easy," spoke the tally-keeper. "This feller is new an' don't understand things. Now young feller, jest what is makin' of you so full of grief?"

"What would be your grievance if you saw somebody branding your cattle?"

"Why, you ——" cried Tom. "Call us cow-thieves!"

He drove in his spurs as he spoke. His horse sprang, was jerked around broadside to Norman, and their two guns went off together.

A bullet clipped the gauntlet of Norman's left glove, and passed through his shirt. It was a close call.

Tom's gun went off a second time, but muzzle up, as he reeled, swayed, and slid slowly head first and backward from the horse. The reins had fallen. The horse shifted nervously, sliding away from the body.

Men ran to him. He was dead. The tally man jumped from the corral and

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going up looked closely, shook his head, pulled at his mustache and faced Norman. All the men were looking silently at Norman, who sat pale and tense, the gun still in his hand.

"He ought a-known better than draw against a man the which had a gun out," said the cook impersonally.

"Young feller," said the tally keeper, "you've killed a man that Red Allister had a special likin' for."

"An' you have branded the last Star Y cow on this range, or any other, until you can show a bill of sale!"

"He's jest the right age to shoot an' like it!" said the cook reflectively, continuing to eye Norman.

"I reckon Allister knowed what he was a-doin'. Him an' Renalds had an understandin'."

"I—not Renalds—am running this ranch now. And I want to know what the —— this cattle drive is being made on my range for!"

"Why," cried the tally man hotly, "they're bein' drove up here to wipe the nesters plumb off your range. Bein' as you're too chicken-hearted to fight nesters, the cowmen from the Santee River up are doin' you a service, an' you come down here a-rarin' an' raisin' ——"

Then the truth came vividly to Norman: Nothing, absolutely nothing, but a mountain or a chasm, could stop a stampede—and if a stampede swept over the nesters' stronghold, who could be blamed? Everybody might know what had happened, but what could be proved? Only that the great beef cut that was being pushed up from the Southwest range to the railroad had stampeded at Ameco Bend.

That, more than a long drawn out warfare in which the nesters could kill as well as the cowmen, would cure nesters of wanting to take up the range. They would never know when another herd might stampede before a storm of horsemen, sweep through their fences as through spiders' webs, knock over their shanties, trample their crops to dust, and pound them into dust too if they tried to turn the herd. It was colossal, terrible, magnificent—worthy of the fierce range.

It showed the desperate determination of the cowmen when they would sacrifice much of their market profits by running weight off their cattle to terrify and destroy the nesters. Not a nester would stay in the country, not another would come, with that terror hanging over them through the night. McCullough, more than any other nester, was the object of the drive.

For one thing, he was an old cattleman himself, therefore a renegade; he could not be frightened, bought out, nor burned out. He was a fighter. It was he who gave other nesters courage and resolution. From the Santee River up the cattlemen had been running the nesters out; an they had swept a dozen ranges, bringing up thousands upon thousands of cattle, pushing them northward, aiming directly at McCullough.

The cattle, being stampeded in the great Ameco Bend would be easily caught again, bunched, distributed, driven back to their own grazing or on to market. But the lesson would remain as a terror to nesters not yet born.

"Where is Red Allister!" Norman cried. "I'll find him. I'll stop this thing!"

"It ain't Red only—it's all the cowmen. Your uncle an' all of 'em!"

"He is in charge!"

"He's in charge," the tally man repeated.

"Then I'll find him—and you, you turn out those unbranded Star Y cows, an' I'll expect twenty dollars a head for those you've already branded!"

With that, Norman wheeled his horse and went at a gallop for the mist of dust floating in the distance.

XXIII

HERE and there Norman saw the chuck-wagons jolting along across country, pushing on to the camping-ground selected for their respective outfits; and every one would be at the proper place in good time, for over that roadless country, where landmarks were obscure to the casual eye, and much alike, a cookie could find the spot his boss had in mind though he, or the night wrangler, drove most of the way half asleep.

Sometimes Norman cut the wagon-tracks of one of these, came up alongside, drew rein for a moment and shouted—

"Where's Allister or Harvey — you know?"

Almost before a shake of the head he would be gone.

Norman came in sight of a drag on the big herd and spurred for him. The fellow

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riding slowly, hat pulled low, body loose as a sack of flour on a saddle. At the sound of clattering hoofs he looked around and stopped, expecting some word of instruction sent by the round-up boss. The sunburned face of the man changed into an expression of mystified surprize as Norman came up. The drag was a Star Y rider, one of its line riders.

"Where's the Star Y outfit?" Norman demanded.

"Makin' camp over at the South Fork bunk-house tonight."

"Where's Allister?"

"I dunno. Harvey an' some of his men were with him this mornin'."

"Some of *his* men—whose man are you?"

"You know what I mean, Mr. Standish. I'm no gunman. I *kin* shoot, but I got hired for cowpunchin'."

"Who burned out Fraziers?" asked Norman, ready to take information where he could find it.

"I weren't there, so I kin't say."

"Do you think it was Allister?"

"There are them as does think so."

"You know what is being planned—with this herd?" asked Norman.

"Yes, it 'pears like ever'body from Santee River north is shippin' out of Martinez this Fall. I hear the cowmen say they're gittin' better rates from Martinez," said the cowboy, with all the innocence in the world.

"Don't you know there are women and children over there——"

Norman swept his hand toward the mountain walled curve of Ameco Bend.

"And you just said that *you* were no 'killer.' But a 'killer' at least shoots men—though he shoots them in the back, or from ambush, as Fuzzy Butler did my brother. Now if you ride in the stampede on McCullough's, you needn't come to the Star Y for your money—you won't get it. I am running that ranch now!"

Norman rode off, heading for the South Fork bunk-house, some five miles away.

It was growing well past the middle of the afternoon; but the herd was still being pressed on, straight for McCullough's. About a mile, or a little less, from McCullough's it would be milled and bedded down, when the night riders would take up their rounds. The cattle would be rested a few hours, perhaps until midnight, then would be brought snorting to their feet by the crack of guns, the flourish of slickers, and sent headlong. After that, not a thousand horsemen could stop them—turn them perhaps, but not stop them within the mile.

The South Fork bunk-house had at one time housed an outpost of ten or twelve men, when Indians and desperadoes, not many years before, were still making occasional raids, being particularly eager to get Star Y horses. So this bunk-house was strongly built of adobe and logs with an adobe corral and a large pasture. An artesian well kept a big water-hole filled, and this was now the last watering-place on the south of the Star Y range, where the cattle drifted in and out from the country round about. But now more 44 Circle cattle than Star Y used the water.

Norman saw that the corral was full of horses; and horses, saddled and bridled, with reins trailing, stood under a clump of cottonwoods before the house. A few men hurried about with a swinging, high-heeled walk. Near the corral three or four chuck-wagons were drawn up.

He dismounted under the cottonwoods, dropped the reins, and walking to the nearest man, a stranger, asked—

"Where's Harvey?"

The man jerked his thumb across his shoulder toward the house.

"Where's Allister?"

The man turned his head, looking about; then:

"I seen Red over there a while ago. He's some'ers about."

Norman went into the bunk-house. It was dim inside. Three or four men had moved the rough, home-made table near the door and were playing cards. Two of them were Star Y men; one was Travers. As he came in Norman overheard the remark:

"Seems changed, Buck does. Like he's seen a ghost."

One after another they glanced up in surprize at Norman.

"Your uncle come a-ready?" asked Travers.

"Where's Harvey?"

"He jest went out—back there."

Travers jerked his head toward a door on the opposite side of the room.

Norman went out of the door and stopped. Harvey was outside, by himself, squatting, smoking a cigaret thoughtfully. He saw who was coming, and stood up slowly with an inquiring stare.

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"Harvey, how many cows has the Star Y sold to other outfits this Fall?"

Harvey looked hard at him and did not answer for a time.

"What's the matter?"

"I just came up from the Three Trees corral, and they are rebranding Star Y cows."

"I allow that's all right. Allister an' your uncle——"

"—have an understanding!" Norman finished angrily.

"Allister he is your uncle's big man. Has charge of the 44 Circle, an' at times a lot to say elsewhere."

This last phrase was not very pleasantly spoken.

"Then why is Allister branding them with a Lazy A—his own private brand, isn't it?"

"Maybe," said Harvey coldly, "you'd better go speak to Allister personal—you are so plumb set on information."

"How long has it been, Mr. Harvey, since you told me that *you* were in charge of the Star Y, and that *you* were going to protect its range and cattle? Now you don't appear to know that Star Y cows are being re-branded, how many, or why—and you don't seem to care!"

Not a muscle of Harvey's face changed. His hard eyes struck against the boy's face; then he said quietly—

"No man can talk that way to me, Mr. Standish!"

"Well I am talking that way to you, and I'm going to say more than that unless you tell me why this Red Allister can brand my cattle whenever he feels like it without my foreman lifting a hand."

"Your uncle an' Allister has an understandin'. Your uncle puts a lot o' trust in Allister, an' I guess he makes an accountin' when the time comes."

"You're fired!" said Norman, also speaking quietly.

"I'm what?"

"Through working for the Star Y. You may be working for Allister. You're not working for me."

"You can't fire me," said Harvey, smiling a little, but unpleasantly. "An' I don't allow that I like Allister much better than you do."

"Well I've fired you anyhow. You are through!"

For a time they eyed each other dangerously. Harvey had a name as a killer, and he was being challenged; but he hesitated. It may not have been fear—was not fear, for Harvey was a silent, fearless man; but he could see by the fierce glare in Norman's eyes that he was ready to shoot it out.

But Harvey had looked into fierce eyes before and shot it out. That was not what stopped him. Harvey was not a hot-blooded man; he had a cold brain, and there were no notches on his gun—which showed that he did not kill for the name of being a "killer." He wasn't at all the sort of man who wanted the blood of this mad young man on his hands.

He spoke quietly—

"I'm goin' on with this round-up, an' when Renalds comes you can talk it over with him."

"You mean you are going on with this stampede to wipe out nesters!"

"Them was Renalds' orders—if the nesters wouldn't go after they seen we meant business."

"I see; then the little stampede against the Fraziers was a little try out—to see how a bigger stampede would work? And done at a time when you were in Martinez—so nobody would think you had a hand in it!"

"See here—you——"

Harvey's wrist bent backward. His arm moved—and stopped.

But Norman had watched keenly for just that first motion. He did not know that Harvey had any hesitancy about shooting him. He did not know that Harvey was going to change his mind after starting to draw, and before Harvey could begin the movement again he was looking with angry disgust into the barrel of Norman's .45—one with the sight filed off, and pulled from a holster that was tied low down on his leg.

"I'll just take that gun off you," said Norman stepping up.

Harvey moved back, his face the color of a boiled beet, and as hot. The shame of it would be in every mouth on the range. No matter how many men he shot afterwards it would always be jeeringly remembered that a raw, tenderfoot kid had disarmed him. So with the muzzle of Norman's gun almost against his stomach he stepped back, but he had too much sense to try to draw though few men were quicker on the draw.

He spoke in almost a whisper.

"You fool, don't you know if you take my gun off me I'll have to kill you before sundown!"

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"Then you're no longer Star Y foreman? You quit—now?"

"I quit," said Harvey.

"An' the Star Y loses a good man, Harvey. But you were on the wrong side of the fence. No man that works for me can take orders from Red Allister—or my uncle either!"

"But who'll finish the round-up?"

"I'll find somebody."

"Look here, Mr. Standish. I want you to git one thing straight. I never took orders from Allister—'cept that he seemed to be almost like your uncle's pardner."

"Why does Allister brand my cows?"

"He gits ten head for ever' nester he runs off the range."

"But he takes Star Y cows. Why not 44 Circle?"

"I don't know nothin' about that. We all figured your uncle owns both outfits. There ain't been nothin' to show any difference."

"Well he doesn't. I own the Star Y—all of it."

Norman jammed his gun back in the holster, thereby practically disarming himself, for against Harvey's draw he would have stood no show, however much he might have been practising the last few weeks. Harvey knew it, even if Norman, lucky for the second time that day, did not.

For a moment Harvey hung undecided, then asked—

"What'd you mean jest now about bein' on the wrong side of the fence."

"I mean that you have been working for a man that is no longer in charge of the ranch. I'm running it now."

Harvey regarded him from narrowed eyes and with a face as expressionless as a dead man, then—

"Well, I begin to allow that you are."

"Say, now Harvey—" Norman was half-grinning, but a little nervously—"how would you like to work for *me*. I'm in need of a good foreman."

"What the ——?" said Harvey slowly, staring as if at a lunatic.

"I mean it. My uncle is a good cowman, and he picked you—that's enough recommendation. That is, if you work for me. But you must not get any of your old instructions mixed up with mine."

"Standish, are you tryin' to be smart, or what?"

"Mr. Harvey, I liked you from the first time I saw you. But I didn't like the way things are run. You were following Renalds' orders—or Allister's, I don't know which. But Renalds hasn't anything to do with the Star Y now except turn over his accounts and explain why every Spring we are branding less than four thousand calves, instead of nearly twenty!"

Harvey continued to look at him with frowning perplexity; then:

"I allow that you're goin' be a good cattleman yourself, or a sudden corpse. But you don't 'pear to know that your uncle is the big man in this country, an' a fighter hisself. He don't take back talk from nobody."

"Well, of course if you are afraid to take the job——"

"Now be careful," said Harvey, quickly and coldly.

"—I'll look somewhere else. But I am not hiring a foreman to do my talking, or back-talking. I'll attend to that. You going to take this job, or not?"

"I reckon as how I'll finish up with the round-up, then I'll see."

"All right. The first thing is to prevent this stampede on McCullough's."

Harvey shook his head soberly:

"It can't be done, Standish. All the range outfits are in this. It's been planned a long time, an' they made an' agreement to stand together an' see it through. They ca'calate they'll lose some cows, but the nesters have to go or they'll lose the whole range. It can't be stopped. Your uncle allowed that he would quit interfering with nesters south of his fenced pasture, where the Fraziers are, but ever'thing north of there has to go. It's here in the Bend that the nesters has the stronghold, under Mac."

"Why have they waited to come on our range before using the stampede?"

"'Cause between here and the Santee River the nesters are on the move. The burning an' warnings done it. The agreement among all the cattlemen was to bunch their herds and stampede 'em wherever the nesters made a stand. Everybody knowed all along that McCullough would make a stand. Outfits are losin' thousands o' dollars trailin' way up here, but that was the cowmen's agreement. They're goin'a lose the range like they lost it other places if they don't keep the nesters out—draw a line an' say, 'keep out!' An' nobody can stop it."

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"Can't Allister?"

"No. Your uncle might, but some o' them outfits has pushed up here nigh two hundred miles, an' if it's called off they're goin' to have somethin' to say, quick an' loud. It would be like goin' to a show an' findin' them actor folks wasn't in no mood for to act. I reckon as how that bunch o' cowboys would put on a show of their own."

"Then the nesters have to be warned!"

"They know what's comin'. McCullough's got too many old friends on the range for him not to be told why he ought to pull stakes an' vamose."

"I'm going to do what I can to help him. Now where's Allister?"

"You keep away from Allister. He may not have no reluctance about shootin' a kid."

"I am going to see him, anyhow. I am going to tell him not to brand any more Star Y cows. Besides, it was he, Harvey, that hired Fuzzy Butler to shoot my brother."

"For a feller the which don't appear to be round folks much, you've heard a lot. Now who's been a-tellin' you that?"

"The same man that told me about the slide-corral at Three Trees an' the four thousand calves."

"He shore must a-been wantin' to see you killed."

"I don't think so. I haven't much use for the fellow himself, but I don't think so. Now where will I find this Red Allister?"

"You take off that there gun—wearin' it low down, too, aren't you! An' I'll go with you. I don't reckon Red, hot as he gits, would shoot a man that wasn't armed—not 'fore witnesses, no how."

"I'll not take it off," said Norman.

"You'd better."

"No. I'm not going to have people say I go around without a gun just to be safe. Where'll we find Allister?"

"He's over by the corral. I was jest goin' to take a walk over that way myself. I'll go with you."

XXIV

SEVERAL men were talking together on the shady side of the corral. The talk was largely about a horse which was still held by a hackamore in the hands of a mere boy who had edged into the group and was listening.

The tallest man among them, the most important, leaned back against the corral and trimmed his finger-nails with a pocket-knife, throwing a swift glance from time to time at the face of one after another of the men who were exchanging remarks. Simmons of the Star Y was there, and another Star Y man.

This tall man who gave attention to his finger-nails, yet listened keenly, had a sharp face with prominent features. His eyebrows were bushy, thick and protruded. They were dark red. His broad, stiff-brimmed hat was pushed back, and showed dark red hair lying on his forehead. He wore two guns. He was Red Allister.

"I allow Buck's been on one powerful drunk," said one.

"He don't 'pear to be sober yit."

"Now will you tell me," said another, "how a man can go on a spree like Buck's been on an' have some money left. He was playin' poker last night, an' Shorty got into him for eighty dollars. An' Buck he paid right up."

"Maybe he's struck it rich some'ers. What you think, Red?"

Allister smiled queerly, and seemed about to answer, but his glance caught sight of Harvey and Norman approaching. Other eyes followed his look.

"Well I'll be hung!" said one of the Star Y men.

"The which I've thought'd be your fate all along," said Simmons. "Why it's that danged Standish kid!"

"Who?" said Allister, standing straight.

Simmons looked keenly at Allister and repeated—

"Young Standish."

Every one became silent and fell back, making way for Harvey and Norman. All knew that there was strained relations between Harvey and Allister on account of the Frazier burning. The boy with the horse edged to one side, staring.

"Red," said Harvey, "this here is Mr. Standish, nephew o' Renalds. He wants to have a little talk."

"Howdy do," said Allister, putting out a long arm, offering his hand.

Norman pointedly ignored the hand, whereupon, instantly, men began to move backwards—all excepting Simmons and Harvey. Harvey remained where he stood, and Simmons moved slightly closer to Allister, whose face had grown tense. His eyes became slits.

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"I want to know," said Norman bluntly, "what sort of arrangement you have——"

"Jest a minute," Harvey broke in. "First, I want to tell you, Red, that I'm not workin' for the Star Y jest at present."

"Now what the ——'s happened to you?" Allister snapped.

"I was fired—'bout five minutes ago."

Some of the men grinned, reassured. It sounded like a joke. But those who knew Harvey well became more grave.

"You mean you let this—this *thing* fire you!"

Allister gave a short contemptuous laugh.

"Yes," said Harvey.

Then Simmons's right hand dropped down to his side and hung loosely, palm backward.

"Harvey," said Allister, "I'm in charge of the Renalds ranches while the old man is away, an' when I ain't suited by your work I'll say so. It suits me fine for you to be foreman, so you're hired again."

"Mr. Harvey can't accept your offer," said Norman.

The men could see that his face had paled, but his voice was quiet and even. Some of them moved yet another step backward. They sensed trouble.

"Why the —— can't he?" Allister demanded raspingly, dropping the pocketknife to the ground and stiffening his body alertly.

"Because I hired him myself, about four and a half minutes ago."

"Oh I see-*ee*," said Allister, doubtfully, a little inclined to think that this was going to be amusing. "An' now that you've hired 'im what do you expect to do with him?"

"To keep rustlers an' such off the Star Y range!"

"A good idear—good idear," Allister answered sarcastically. "Been havin' a good many losses up this way I hear."

"Yes. Recently we seem to have lost a good many head, down *this* way!"

It was the tone and not the words that caused many of the men to step with frank discretion up close to the corral, well to the other side of Allister. They saw a quarrel being forced on the man with a reputation for being one of the quickest in the country to take up any sort of a quarrel; but the situation was made uncertain by the presence of Harvey.

Nobody knew just where he stood, and there had been a feeling among the cowboys that something unpleasant between him and Allister was due to come from the burning of Frazier's. Yet Harvey was no friend of nesters—and young Standish was. It gave the situation a three-cornered angle.

Allister glanced inquiringly at Harvey. Harvey returned the glance with steady eyes, but said nothing, gave no sign.

"I don't quite understand what's goin' on here," said Allister to Harvey.

Allister at times was rather cautious, a little too cautious, some people thought, for a really brave man, though he had a bad name for quick shooting; but there were those who said that he had not got his bad name by shooting men who were known to be good with a gun, therein—so some people said—differing from Harvey, who stood his ground before any man.

Harvey now spoke slowly, with straight-eyed gravity:

"Well, it's this way. Mr. Standish rode in about five minutes ago and asked me some questions about the ranch. What I said didn't appear to suit him none; so he said, 'Harvey, you're fired.' I told him as how I didn't allow he could fire me. Then he throwed a gun on me an' said, 'you're fired!' I said that I allowed as I was. Then he said if I wanted to work for him instead of for Renalds as how he would hire me again. I ain't accepted this here offer as yit, but I allow that I shore has been fired."

Men looked curiously, with sober gaze at Norman. Simmons stared with frowning puzzlement. Among those who knew him, Harvey had the name of a man that never joked.

"He throwed a gun on *you?*" asked Allister slowly. "When you was wide awake an' on your feet?"

Harvey nodded faintly.

The man that could throw a gun on Jim Harvey, and beat him so far that there was time left to talk, had to move just a little bit faster than it was thought anybody on the range, near or far, could move. Bob Standish might possibly have done it with the least little bit of a start, for Bob was lightning with a six-gun: but face to face, with Harvey watching, not even Bob could have done that.

Allister now regarded Norman with more thoughtful and less truculent eyes. And all the other eyes, excepting Harvey's, were turned on him. Norman's face grew red

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under the admiration, but he kept still. Simmons and the other Star Y man exchanged wondering glances.

"Well," said Allister, stooping for his pocket-knife, "if you consider yourself fired, I suppose as how you are."

"And now Allister," Norman began, "I want to know what kind of arrangement you have with my uncle that allows you to re-brand Star Y cows on the open range?"

Allister stiffened again, for Norman's tone was hot, but this time he did not drop his knife. It appeared that swift shooting ran in the Standish family, and Norman certainly appeared to be looking for trouble. So Allister lapsed into an attitude of unconcern, and running the end of a blade under a thumb-nail, remarked indifferently:

"Young feller, jest supposin' when Renalds comes home you take it up with him. He'll explain."

"Allister, I am owner and manager of the Star Y; and I give you notice here and now that any existing agreement between you and the Star Y is at an end. And before you put another Lazy A on a Star Y cow, you make sure that you have a bill of sale in your pocket—signed by *me*. And somebody is going to pay for those cows I found being branded over at Three Trees today!"

Allister pulled down his hat and peered frowningly from under it. He knew that all through the night men bustling with news would ride about, spreading the story that the Standish tenderfoot had bluffed down Red Allister. It would be all over the range. And Allister needed his reputation as a bad man, needed it all the more because of that cautious streak in his nature that had kept him from being killed. So now he said, with every appearance of holding himself in from eating Norman alive—

"I wouldn't take talk like that from any man but for your uncle bein' a friend of mine, an'——"

The sentence was never finished. Norman broke in with a tone of fury—

"You never showed any such consideration as that for my brother—you hired Fuzzy Butler to shoot him in the back!"

Norman would have been dead in half a second—for no man could take that and not draw; and in his anger Norman, more inclined to swing a fist than a gun, forgot all about shooting—but for the fact that Simmons, foreseeing the words that were going to crack on the end of that sentence, had drawn with a slithering flash of forearm and held a gun to Allister's belly before the falling pocket-knife struck the ground; and Allister was caught with two hands to his guns and neither out of its holster. At the same moment Harvey's right hand fell away from his gun's butt so quickly that no one had seen that he, too, had started to draw.

Allister half-raised his hands and held them up.

"I reckon," said Simmons slowly, "as how you'd better recollect that this boy's uncle is still a friend o' yourn. An' jest to relieve any further doubts in your mind that ain't fully expressed by my actions, I hereby declare myself to all present that I am ridin' an' *shootin'* for Standish o' the Star Y.

"An' you don't want to feel none grieved at me, Red, a-cause if I hadn't stopped you jest now, we'd all be a bendin' over your carcass a-looking to see jest where the kid's bullet come out. Like his brother Bob, when he means bizness he don't start to draw till the other feller's gun is comin' out. He's shore chain lightnin' with a gun, this boy is. So you jest keep on recollectin' that his uncle is a friend o' yourn!"

Red Allister glared about from face to face. Men to the right and left of him were grinning. They now understood that young Standish was no gun-fighter, but that, however it may have come about, he was under the protection of both Harvey and Simmons; both men who would shoot it out with anybody. It had been a good joke, thought the grinning men: through that story of having thrown a gun on Harvey the Standish tenderfoot had been able to bluff down Red Allister for a time, then throw Fuzzy Butler into his face!

Allister, too, now knew that he had been bluffed and trapped, and that his own hard name would be the laughing-stock of men who had been afraid of him. His anger was unbounded, but it focused on Harvey.

"You put this up on me!" he cried at Harvey.

"Slim," said Harvey quietly, his eyes unwinkingly on Allister's face, "you put up your gun an' stand back."

Simmons slid his gun into its holster and stepped aside.

"Now—" Harvey was speaking to Allister, speaking with a tone low and ominous

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as the rasp of a sword as it comes from the scabbard—"nobody ain't holdin' your hands, an' I ain't got no uncle who's your friend! An' I'm tellin' you, Red Allister, in the presence of witnesses, that you are a —— cow-thief!"

Every man ducked, at least a little; but not a gun was drawn. Harvey's elbow crooked, his fingers bent claw-like, and he waited.

But Allister took the words and swallowed them though he choked as if swallowing sawdust, for he was face to face with death and he did not have the raw courage to shoot it out. He knew that Harvey meant to kill him, and that Harvey could do it, though he himself might have two guns roaring and both men be dead when the last shot hit. He might have killed Harvey, but he knew that Harvey would get him: and he quit, cold.

It was the third time in fifteen minutes that Allister had been called. Norman had bluffed him, Simmons had sneaked the draw on him; but Harvey was giving an even break, and still waiting for Allister to start.

"I see," said Allister, who had cunning to fill up the cracks in his courage. "You think if you shoot me, nobody'll know that you got *your* whack o' them cows!"

"Draw!" snapped Harvey. And with the mere shadow of a movement his gun, held well back of the hip and low down, was pointing over the holster. But Allister raised his hands.

"No, Jim Harvey," he cried, "you don't git out of your part by no gun-play! You think with me out o' the way you can pull the wool over this Standish kid. You've sold me Star Y cows yourself!"

"Draw!" Harvey repeated, low-voiced, intense, murderous.

"No!" Allister shouted, lifting his hands higher. "You wait till Renalds comes home, then we'll settle this thing all round!"

This was a neat enough speech, with the plausible glimmer of some truth in it; but it was made before men who saw the bigger truth behind the words, which was that Red Allister had crawled, got down on his belly and crawled.

Harvey slowly lowered his half-drawn gun into its holster, dropped his hand and stood looking into Allister's face, which had turned as gray as a sage-leaf.

"You are a liar, Red Allister!" said Harvey.

"Wait till Renalds comes. Jest wait!"

Said a voice off to one side, carefully pitched to carry—

"Must make Red powerful tired to carry them ornaments around on his hips!"

And the men laughed with sneers and steady eyes.

It was pathetic, cruel, tragic, merciless; and Norman, whose sensibilities now almost played him false, felt a kind of pity for Allister. For years the man had concealed the flaws in his courage, built up a name, moved among the leaders of the country's big men—and now, striking against the iron that was in Harvey, he had crumbled.

Even the boy who was holding the horse's hackamore drawled loudly:

"I reckon as how I'll start packin' a couple o' guns. It 'pears to be a sign you don't wanta be shot at!"

But Allister was broken. The first sweep of anger that might have carried him into the fight was gone. He did not have the cold nerve that pulls a man up when he has been beaten. He was feverishly murderous, but not brave enough to take the only way out that he could have taken to restore his prestige. To do that he would have had to take on Harvey and Simmons, both of them, in a sudden, three-cornered fight; and when the smoke had drifted away the men around about would have looked over the bodies and pronounced judgment with slow, thoughtful, respectful words.

Instead, Allister pulled his hat down with a savage jerk and strode off, looking neither to one side nor the other. Their eyes followed. All were silent. He went to a horse that stood with reins trailing, picked up the reins, passed them over the horse's head, swung into the saddle, and rode off without looking back.

Then Harvey turned to Norman, speaking straight—

"You heard what Allister said——"

"You're my foreman. And when I hire a man I don't listen to tales against him," said Norman, and put out his hand.

The men were talking with slow, half-finished sentences, unexcitably, one with another:

"Done for on this range."

"Got a lot o' cattle, Red has."

"Never understood why Renalds kept him."

"Somebody's shore goin' git hurt——"

"—the back, likely."

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"Done for on ever' other man's range too."

A man rode up to them. He was excited and on a froth-covered horse:

"Where's Allister? They said he was here! I been ridin'—Tom School was shot down to Three Trees. Young Standish done it. Why—what's the matter with you fel— Oh!"

The horseman did not know Norman, but then instinctively knew who he was.

"See here, Jeff," said one of the men, "we ain't knowed nothin' about Mr. Standish shootin' Tom School, but he made Allister crawl right here some two minutes er go; an' if you want to fin' Red, I don't reckon he's gone far, though he left, ridin' fast!"

Jeff Jones, himself one of Allister's men and friends, was a pretty hard man, but he saw that the attitude of those standing there was unfriendly.

"Made Allister crawl?"

"Shore did!" two or three voices answered at once.

Jeff regarded Norman with new and puzzled interest; then asked—

"Which way did Allister ride?"

Some one pointed. Jeff reined about.

"I think you fellers have all gone loco," he said, mystified and half-angry. "An' you goin' hear some more about this!"

XXV

JUST before sun-down, Norman and Simmons, having ridden past the deserted houses of two nesters, came within rifle shot of McCullough's and drew rein because there were men with rifles—and pitchforks—just outside the fence who made signs and shouts that were perfectly clear.

Said Simmons:

"They haven't got a chanct for it, 'cept to cut an' run, an' I'll be danged if they ain't a-hauling hay out! I allowed as how Mac had some better sense than to stick."

Once more, detailed by Harvey, Simmons was acting as an escort. This time he liked Norman well enough, but it was hard for him to be on the side of the nesters, though he was willing to "allow" it would have been better of the cowmen had "reasoned" some more with these fellows.

On the way to McCullough's they had talked together, at last freely.

Simmons said that everybody had known for years that Renalds was pushing Star Y cattle down on his own range, and building up the 44 Circle with Star Y bulls.

"But it wasn't nobody's bizness. Your brother Bob used to make a fuss about it, an' him an' Renalds had words frequent. Ever' year your uncle give Harvey some cows, ten or fifteen off the ranch, an' Harvey he sold 'em to Red. Allister he's wanted to be a big cow-man hisself, an' I hear tell your uncle give him some cows for ever' nester he run off."

"That was what was the matter 'tween Harvey an' Red—they ain't never been good friends, but al'us perlite, till Red he sends some fellers up an' burns Fraziers. Harvey wants 'em off the land, burnt out or however you have to git 'em off, but he don't want Red interferin'. An' son, any time you've got Jim Harvey standin' by you, you shore got one friend you can count on. I knowed him down in the Nations.

"Your brother Bob, he liked Harvey, but he shore did hate Red Allister."

"And my uncle, too?"

"No. Nope, not so much as you 'd think. Bob he didn't have no use for Renalds, but he sorta liked him. Y'see, Renalds he never spoke no ill o' Bob—jest said he didn't have no sense, which was a fact. An' if your uncle had something to say he'd go hunt Bob up an' say it to his face. Then Bob'd say his say back. It was a funny thing.

"Bob he used to put in most o' his time jest waiting for Renalds to tell him to git off the ranch, but your uncle never told him that a-tall. He jest paid him cow-puncher wages an' let him alone. Bob used to say, 'I own half o' this ranch', an' Renalds he would say: 'It's a good thing you aren't in charge of it, then. I wouldn't trust the management of a wagon-load of hay to you.' Bob used to tell that on hisself! He shore was a wild-actin' feller, afraid of nothin'—but with no jedgment.

"An' now son, you've shore got to look out for Red Allister. Him or some o' his men'll try to git you. He'll try to git Harvey too, an' if he can a-fore your uncle gits back, cause then Red can tell his story to suit hisself."

"Why has Mr. Renalds put up with Allister all these years?"

"Son, I don't know. You can't shake the old man if he takes a likin' to a feller an'

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that feller does his work. Besides, I hear tell that Red onct pulled the old man out of a hole when some rustlers had your uncle cornered. McCullough can tell you more about that than anybody. He was in the country when it happened, an' Allister shore hates the sight o' Mac."

"But, son, you 've got another man campin' on your trail, the which is Buck Blevins. He's plumb mad, Buck is. He says it's over sendin' him with that milch-cow, but I allow it 's more on account o' Jess Frazier. Buck he was shore gone over that girl. He showed up some days ago at the 44 Circle, looking for work. He looks bad, Buck does. Been drinkin' powerful. An' I al'us liked that boy. You done wrong to make him take in that cow. An' Buck he says that he borrowed the money an' mailed it to your uncle, so he don't owe the Star Y nothin'."

In the midst of their conversation they had come near McCullough's fence.

Over to the east the big herd was being milled by a string of cowboys that rode round and round, turning the cattle in upon themselves; and the dust flew up as though the herd, bellowing in protest, was being bedded down on smoldering fire.

Norman and Simmons now saw two or three of the men with rifles outside the fence bunch up together, then in a shrill shout one of them called:

"What you fellers a'ter?"

"To have a talk!" Norman shouted.

"Better git!"

"We are coming in!" yelled Norman.

With that, he and Simmons rode forward at a trot.

A hay wagon, drawn by four horses, came lumbering rapidly across the field, passing through a part of the fence that had been broken down and so came outside of McCullough's land.

"Now what do you reckon Mac can be up to?" asked Simmons. "See where he's been haulin' hay an' dumpin' it all along outside the fence. Look at the wagons he's got to work. Wonder, does he think them cows is goin' stop to eat? Mac he's plumb crazy."

"Now who is coming?" asked Norman.

A horse and rider swung around from behind the hay wagon and came at a mad gallop.

"It's that McCullough girl," said Simmons, with something like a little uneasiness in his voice.

She was on the star-faced black that Norman had taken at Reddin's, and now rode straight for them.

She drew up with a high-handed jerk at the reins, and stopping the horse directly in front of them, as if barring their way, said angrily—

"What do you men want?"

Both swept off their hats before such imperiousness, and Norman raised his eyes, waiting, hoping to be recognized.

Kate McCullough was a strong slim girl, straight as a young pine. Her eyes were dark and bright, often flashing with temper; her hair was dark and now fluffed out from under her hat by the wind, a broad cowboy hat, caught under the chin by leather thongs. She sat the horse like a man, with long stirrups and wore a fawn-colored, divided skirt. Her small feet were in slim, high boots, her little hands in gauntlet, deer-skin gloves. A rifle scabbard with a gun in it was fastened to the saddle, and a revolver was in a holster at her saddle-horn. She wore a white silk handkerchief at her neck, and her blouse of black silk had the Double S brand embroidered on the breast pocket.

Norman thought her very beautiful—as did all the men on the range, but they dreaded her tongue.

"Don't you remember me?" asked Norman.

"Perfectly," said Kate, coolly, without a sign of recognition.

"You don't appear very pleased to see me."

"Why should I be, Pet Standish? You were always petted and babied—taken East and polished up till now you look more like a girl than I do!"

Norman's face grew red.

Simmons spoke: "Now Miss McCullough, that there ain't no way to treat a man, the which has come to help you all, an' ——"

"I choose my own friends, Mr. Slim Simmons; and as for help—we do not need it from Pet Standish, or any of his friends!"

"Don't call me that name again!" Norman said hotly, spurring his horse and at the same time reining back the bewildered animal. "And if you don't need help from me and my friends, you had better send that star-face you are riding back to Reddin's—and let rustlers have him!"

Her eyes flashed and narrowed, and the

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very red mouth tightened for a moment, then opened: she spoke with skillful unreason—

"It 's likely some of your men took him in the first place!"

"That's false, and you know it!" Norman said.

"Why are you here? What do you want?" Kate demanded.

"There 'll be a stampede—" Norman swung an arm toward the cattle—"everything will be wiped out. You must get away—all of you!"

"I thought you were friendly toward nesters," she said, putting almost as much scorn on "nesters" as on "you."

"I came to warn you. Your fences won't stand a minute. All the cattlemen from Santee Divide north are in this drive."

"Yes, Red Allister and Black Renalds, and *you!* How kind of you to come and warn us to get off the range. We are *not* going!"

"Where is your father?"

"He is busy. He has no time to talk with you."

"And I have no time to talk with you," said Norman, and spurred past her.

She looked after him with a quizzical frown; then snapped at Simmons:

"And may I ask what *you* are grinning about?"

Simmons again swept off his hat.

"You shore may!"

"Tell me then!"

"I was jest thinkin' how much some other fellers today wished they had been purty girls so they could talk to him like you 've done—an' not git hurt any."

Kate frowned. All her life she had hated girls and herself for being one.

"Who did he ever hurt?" she asked scornfully.

"I don't know jest what all he done yesterday, nor the day a-fore, but today he's been some occupied. He killed Tom School over to the Three Trees corral where they was puttin' a Lazy A on some Star Y's. Over to South Fork bunk-house he fired Jim Harvey, then throwed a gun on him when Jim didn't allow as how he was fired, which changed Jim's mind some considerable, though Jim he is a stubborn cuss. Then—what was it you called him? Pet? That 's it.

"Then this Pet o' yourn went lookin' for Red Allister an' he backed Red up ag'in' the 'dobe corral an' told him not to brand no more Star Y cows till he had a bill o' sale signed by the manager o' the Star Y, the same bein' one Norman Standish, who's been polished up back East. An' that weren't all. I guess Red Allister anyhow would have liked a-been in skirts jest then, seein' as how there was a lot of us standin' around listenin' to a full-growed man with two guns on him takin' it peaceable-like."

"*He* told that to Red Allister?" she asked doubtfully, staring after Norman.

"Miss, he weren't even started to talkin' good when he told Red that. He told him some more, the which was that Red Allister hired Fuzzy Butler to shoot his brother Bob in the back!"

Kate whirled around. She stared incredulous, astonished:

"You mean that? *He* said *that?*"

"I shore do. I heard 'im. I was right there. An' Red Allister, he didn't even draw—so o' course, nobody got shot. But this Pet o' yourn is shore one wild-eyed *hombre* when he gits a-goin'."

"He's no pet of mine," she snapped. "I hate him!"

"I allow as how you 've sorta made that plain, an' that's a fact."

"Did he honestly say that to Red Allister?"

"Yes, miss. He shore did."

"An' Allister didn't shoot?"

"No miss, he didn't shoot."

"Why didn't he?"

"Waal, miss, I ain't no hand to tell why folks don't do things, but I reckon as how Red was sorta knocked over like—an' sorta figgered he'd git hurt if he tried any gun-play. Quick shootin' 'pears to run in the Standish family."

"I think if you talked less there would be more truth in what you said!" Kate answered pointedly.

She knew that something was wrong in this story. She did not believe that anybody could say a thing like that to Red Allister and not get shot, though she would readily believe any bad thing of Allister himself.

She then loosened the reins, clucked to the star-face and set out after Norman. Simmons followed, smiling vaguely.

Along the outside of the fence men were pitchforking hay into a wide windrow as the wagon behind which they worked drove ahead. Another wagon, drawn by four

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horses, was now under one of the stacks in the field where men loaded rapidly. Other men were gathering dried sage and mesquite and scattering it over the windrow of hay.

"Mac's plumb crazy," Simmons told himself, "if he thinks that there brush is a-goin' stop cattle!"

Kate rode up to where the farmers had stopped Norman.

"It 's all right," she said crossly to them, "I'll take him to dad."

She called her grandfather dad.

The nesters reluctantly gave in, not without grumbling—"We orta make 'em turn tail an' skeedaddle."

But she paid no attention to what they said; saying herself to them:

"Put down your rifles. Get hold of your forks and scatter that hay. And don't spread it too thin. Put a big pile of brush at each corner of the field, like dad told you. An' hurry about it!"

"She shore oughta 'a' been a man!" said Simmons to his horse.

To Norman she said coolly:

"Come with me if you want to see dad."

They rode along at a trot, Simmons following.

Norman saw that she was repeatedly glancing at him, and he could not imagine why she had such a mystified expression, as if she could hardly believe that he was who he claimed to be.

They rode through a place in the fence where it had been cut to allow the hay wagons to pass in and out of the field, then took a diagonal course for the house.

XXVI

THE house was a solid adobe building about which was a grove of cottonwoods and some willows, with corrals and sheds close at hand. The sheds were also of adobe. And the adobe was one very good reason why a party of raiding cowboys could not have rushed in and burned out McCullough as they might burn out other nesters.

As they came near they saw many women, some children and a few men under the trees. Household goods, bedding, stoves, a sewing machine or two, even plows, were together in disorderly piles. Dogs ran about sniffing, now and then breaking into a fight to which no one gave attention.

The women bustled anxiously, and some of the men, with slow sullen movements, helped at whatever the women were about. Other men gathered together and talked with monosyllabic grimness. Rifles leaned against the house. Horses, in harness, were tied to wagons drawn up near the sheds. The barnyard was full of horses. Chickens lay gasping in rows, their feet tied together.

It was like the halting place of refugees; and in truth these families had fled before an invasion, gathering under the leadership and at the stronghold of old McCullough.

They now looked up with surly eyes, staring at Norman and Simmons, for these men were cowmen.

"Where's dad?" Kate asked.

"He went over toward them there Jacksons. They ain't come yit, the Jacksons ain't. The Fraziers, they are over there. They knowed them Jacksons back in Kansas, years ago. Mac, he went over to git 'em to come in."

"Them Jacksons ain't got no sense!" a woman shouted shrilly.

Kate looked about wrathfully at the idling men.

"What are you standing around here for, doing nothing? Get out in the field—every one of you. Take those wagons, load them up with brush. Get to work! Do you think you can stop those cows by whistling! Be moving!"

Kate swept the air with a gloved hand in a gesture of command.

Norman overheard a man say—

"I shore pity the feller that ever marries her!"

The shrill-voiced woman loudly echoed Kate's words:

"You men orta be ashamed, loafin' an' hangin' around here! You orta pitch in an' help without bein' tol'—great big loafers, ye air!"

The men sullenly moved off.

One of the women came up to Kate's stirrup:

"Bud Russell, he come in a while ago, Miss Kate. He's in the house there gettin' a bite t' eat."

Kate's face suddenly glowed. She jumped from her horse, dropping the reins, and ran into the house.

Norman and Simmons edged their horses together. The woman watched them from under lowered lids and out of eyes' corners,

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and spoke among themselves of "them thar cowboys" and wondered "what in tarnation they were a-wanting." Children scrambled over the bedding, yelling and scuffling. To them, this was great fun, like having a picnic.

"Slim, have they got a chance here?"

"Not that I know of, they ain't. If you was to ask me I'd shore say they've picked out the place that'll be the onsafest. Red Allister an' old Mac, I hear tell, are ol'-time enemies. An' Allister's goin' try to make shore that Mac has more than his share o' trouble this night."

"But will men listen to Allister after the way Harvey called him?"

"Dang it, I ain't no hand to tell what men will do. But I allow they'll carry out orders they've already listened to, an' them orders was to burn ever'thing on Mac's place that'll make smoke after the cows have gone through. There ain't much to burn—but still you can make quite a fire out o' the stuffin' in a house.

"Waal I'll be dingbusted to——!"

Simmons broke off with sudden emphasis, and looking where Simmons's eyes were turned, Norman saw a tall lean man in a fringed, deer-skin suit, a long rifle in his hand, leading a lop-eared sleepy bronco toward the water trough in the corral.

"Old Sawyer!" Norman exclaimed.

"It's him, shore!"

Simmons rode against the corral and shouted:

"Hey there, old timer! Whatever become o' them rustlers you was a-goin' catch?"

Sawyer turned around, looked up keenly, eyed Simmons for a time, shifted his gaze to Norman, stared at him, moved his glance back to Simmons, then turned and walked on with his lop-eared horse.

"Now what the ——'s he doin' here?" said Simmons. "An' where has he been all this time? But you might as well talk to a dead Indian as to him. You'd git more answers outa the Injun!"

Then their attention was attracted to the other side.

Bud Russell had come from the house alone. He was grinning. He carried a .45 in his hand, but held it by the muzzle. He had hailed them with a cheerful shout.

"'Lo, Slim! 'Lo, Mr. Standish! How's every'body. Here 's a gun I picked up not far from your home ranch, Mr. Standish. Thought it might belong to somebody you knew. Anybody lose a gun you know of, Slim?"

"Not as I hear tell there ain't."

"I hear you been over to Three Trees corral, Mr. Standish. Had an argument with Tom School, I hear. Kate she was sayin' jest now you had a run-in with Harvey an' Allister, too, over the brandin' of some cows."

"Any man that touches a Star Y cow without permission has to pay for it!" said Norman, tensely, looking straight into Russell's face.

"Them's proper sentiments!" cried Russell approvingly, at the same time grinning. "Ain't they, Slim?"

Simmons answered gravely that they sure were. He detected an undercurrent of meaning in the conversation, but could not make out just what was causing the stormy tenseness. He soon learned.

"Simmons," said Norman, "yesterday I caught Russell here driving off a bunch of Star Y cows toward Turges Cañon. I rode down on him. He got the drop and made me throw away my gun—that's it in his hand—and I am——"

Quicker than a snake straightens its neck at the strike, Simmons's gun flashed and pointed at Russell, who, caught with the gun backwards in his hand, was helpless. He dropped the gun and half-raised his hands. His face was suddenly tense and hard.

Women screamed. Children, frightened by their mothers' cries, squawked and darted for sheltering skirts. Old Sawyer dropped the rope where his horse was drinking and stood with his long rifle poised across his body, while he peered grimly over the top of the corral.

Kate, startled by the outcry, appeared hurriedly in the doorway. She held in her hand a letter written on pages torn from a small account book.

"Here! What's the meaning of this!" she cried, cramming the letter into the pocket of her skirt and coming at a run, head up, eyes flashing. "You, Slim Simmons, put down that gun!"

"Waal, miss," said Simmons, keeping his eyes on Russell, "Bud here has been stealin' Star Y cows——"

"Oh, it's that is it!" she answered with ringing contempt. "Well, Bud Russell does just what I tell him, and I told him to take those cows!"

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Simmons then lowered his gun with a slow dazed movement and looked at her blankly—

"You?"

"Yes!"

"I reckon," said Simmons, shoving home the .45 into its holster, "as how I'm goin' be pullin' my freight back to the Nations. This here danged country is too excitin' for me. *You* been rustlin' Star Y cows?"

"Yes!" Kate answered, with a stamp of her foot.

"Miss, I'd shore admire to have you for a friend, but I jest got to say somethin' I heard a little while back, the which bein' that if you didn't talk so much I could believe more o' what you said!"

"Nobody's stelin' any of your old cows!" she retorted, somehow not seeming so angry as she tried to appear. "Bud and I were just changing the range a little. Sawyer there knows. It was he that found —or rather that told us about the valley up north of where the cañon forks!"

Simmons looked at Norman, and Norman looked at Simmons; then Simmons made a short gesture that as much as said: "I pass. You go ahead and do the talking."

"Miss McCullough," Norman then said, a little ironically, for he was still nettled by her greeting, "would it be too much to ask you to explain why it isn't stealing to drive Standish cows off their range to another place where they can't be found?"

She answered with cool impertinence—

"Yes, Mr. Standish, it would!"

She turned away, and pulling out her crumpled letter, walked toward the house, straightening and reading as she went.

Bud Russell was grinning again.

"There's shore a-goin' be —— a-poppin' over this," said Simmons, eying Russell's grin.

"There shore is," Russell agreed frankly, widening his grin.

"But you," said Norman coldly, "seem to think it's a joke."

"I allow, Mr. Standish, as how I shore do!"

"And I allow, Mr. Russell"—Norman was deliberately mimicking his phrasing—"as how if you want to keep out of trouble, you had better be getting those cows and horses down out of the mountains just as quickly as you can!"

Russell laughed softly:

"If you want them cows, now's your chanct to go for 'em. 'Cause the cañon it ain't guarded tonight. But by tomorrer night Sawyer may be back up there ag'in, an' if things git too hot it won't be jest *hosses* he shoots!"

"Sawyer!" Norman exclaimed.

Then wheeling his horse as close as he could to the corral fence, he leaned over and said:

"Look here, Sawyer. My father liked you—he treated you well. Now I'm in charge of the Star Y, and I want to know what you mean by throwing in with rustlers?"

The tall old man eyed him piercingly, then stooping down, picked up the end of the bronco's rope and started off without a word, without looking back.

Russell again laughed softly.

"Jest supposin' you stop that!" said Simmons grimly; and Russell's face cleared instantly.

"I don't know what to make of it," Norman said, half to himself.

"But, fellows," Russell said quickly, lowering his voice so the words could not be overheard, "I swear to you on a stack o' Bibles there ain't been nary a cow stole off the Standish range. I'd tell you in a minute jest how things stand, but I promised not to tell anybody. But you know dad-burned well that old Sawyer there wouldn't steal a Star Y cow—not to keep himself from starvin'."

"He shot horses!" said Norman.

"Yes, but he didn't shoot *men!* An' you don't think for half a minute that a girl like Bob Standish's Kate there is goin' to mix up with any real cattle-stealin'! Why, ol' Dad McCullough would tie her to a snubbin' post an' quirt her to an inch o' her life. I tell you hones', Mr. Standish, it's all square an' you'll say so too when——"

"Did she marry my brother?" demanded Norman tensely.

"Why, yes," said Russell, grinning again and moving closer. "She married Bob nigh six months ago—they went plumb clear over to——"

TO BE CONTINUED

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PURI-PURI. WHITE MAN FASHION

By Merlin Moore Taylor

Author of "The Quest of the Blood Red Pearls."

PORT MORESBY'S white population, assembled to greet the tri-weekly steamer which links New Guinea with the outside world, gasped when it saw the Honorable Cecil Featherstone.

Immaculate ducks, snowy pith helmet, fawn-colored gloves and a monocle are not exactly the things that Port Moresby associates with a prospective patrol officer of the Papuan Armed Constabulary, who has a rough and ready job at best.

"He seems a bit of an ass," was the whispered comment as the Honorable Cecil sauntered down the *Morinda's* gang-plank in the wake of the fussy little secretary who had come to escort him to Government House.

The subdued amusement was not caused wholly by the appearance of the Honorable Cecil, however. Partly it was the result of mental pictures of what would happen after his Excellency, the governor, had clapped eyes upon this pink-cheeked, silky-mustached younger son of a British nobleman. His Excellency had proved himself expert at making monkeys out of asses who were "wished on" him by powerful influences back home, working through the officials down at Melbourne.

Confronted with the problem of furnishing a few thrills for the bored such as the Honorable Cecil the Melbourne authorities had discovered a way of passing the buck. They sent their annoying guests on to New Guinea with a recommendation that they be appointed patrol officers.

Having no choice except at the expense of a row, his Excellency had learned to slip the buck along in his turn by ordering his new subordinate on bush patrol. One dose usually proved sufficient.

Port Moresby had seen most of these cocky young tenderfeet come back from the jungle, crushed, bewildered and with a terrified look in their eyes and only too ready to throw up their commissions and take the first boat out. For Papua does that to the newcomer. Even seasoned explorers, finding Nature ever waiting, red-toothed, beside the trail—to horrify or drive mad, to maim and even to kill—have fled from its dank jungles in despair.

So Port Moresby, having only one look at the Honorable Cecil before his Excellency's launch whisked him off across the harbor, voiced the opinion that within six weeks at most his name would be added to the list of those who had tried and failed.

His stock went up a trifle when it was learned that he had formally been sworn into the service and was busy learning the details of a patrol officer's duties. Evidently the governor had not been at his best with his vivid descriptions of jungle work or the Honorable Cecil did not easily funk it.

"Puri-Puri, White Man Fashion," copyright, 1923, by Merlin Moore Taylor.

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Several days later it was given out that Patrol Officer Featherstone was leaving with a detail of constabulary for a patrol of Mekeo district. Officially this meant only that Mekeo's villages were to be visited for the purpose of inspecting health and road conditions and seeing what the people were doing. But Port Moresby knew that the Honorable Cecil was being initiated into the game of "getting Tata-Koa's necklace" and chortled.

Apparently his Excellency, probing beneath the immaculate ducks, had discounted the fawn gloves and the monocle and decided that the stiffest of his tests for new patrol officers was none too tough for the Honorable Cecil.

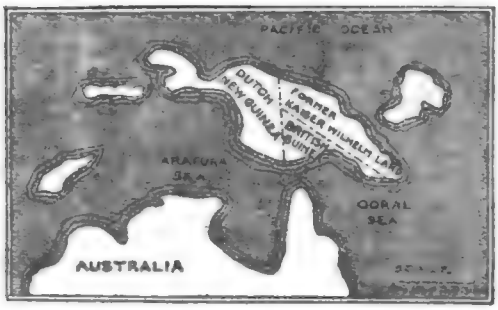
Tata-Koa was a most irritating thorn in the side of the Papuan administration. He was the king bee sorcerer in a district which is the hot-bed of sorcery and superstition and he held Mekeo in the hollow of his wrinkled old hand. In addition to the things handed down to him by a long line of ancestors who had been sorcerers too, Tata-Koa was a shrewd and cunning old rascal with ideas of his own.

With him sorcery was a fine art. Taken apart and analyzed, his stock in trade would have been found to consist largely of blackmail, auto-suggestion and preying upon the superstitious fears of his people, backed up by clever poisoning. His ignorant and savage clients, however, knew nothing of these things and lumped them all together under the head of *puri-puri*, or magic, and paid old Tata-Koa exhorbitant fees in the things which constitute New Guinea wealth.

Proof that Tata-Koa had climbed to the greatest heights to which a worker of *puri-puri* can aspire lies in the fact that the other sorcerers of Mekeo kow-towed to him and paid him tribute. It is characteristic of the Papuan mind that, knowing themselves for charlatans, they should not have seemed to realize that Tata-Koa was only a greater charlatan and his bunk and mummery no more effective than their own.

Tata-Koa had not been slow to take advantage of them. He took his pick from their hoards of dogs' teeth, shells and other gimcracks dear to a native's heart and fashioned for himself a long and heavy necklace—the visible symbol of his power over the childlike Mekeo tribesmen.

Years back his Excellency had seen the need of breaking that power if ever the white man was to be supreme in Mekeo. He elected to begin the discrediting of the sorcerer by depriving him of the necklace. Too wise to take it by force, as easily could have been done, the governor planned to have Tata-Koa give it up voluntarily as proof of his subjection to the "govamen'."



Only one of the many schemes to accomplish this came anywhere near succeeding. That was when Tata-Koa was offered a village constableship, carrying with it the privilege of wearing a uniform and suspending from his neck a brass chain with a large medallion upon which were engraved the letters "V. C." At the last minute the sorcerer discovered that neatly rolled up in the bribe was the necessity of proclaiming allegiance to the white man and reluctantly rejected the offer.

After that "getting Tata-Koa's necklace" became a sort of farce which had as its object the undoing of new and unwanted patrol officers.

His Excellency was more than fair with Featherstone. He said frankly that the job was tough, an almost hopeless one.

"Superstition and sorcery are too deeply ingrained in the natives for us to hope to wipe it out entirely," he said. "But if we can limit it to benevolent sorcery we shall have taken a long step forward. Tata-Koa is wiser than most of his fellows. He has a knowledge of weather signs and soil conditions that enables him to make shrewd guesses as to whether the gardens will flourish or be a failure. He knows the medicinal value of heat and certain herbs and roots. If he chooses to use these things as a basis for his sorcery and accompanies them by rites and incantations for which the natives are willing to pay, I have no desire to stop it.

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"But I do want to stamp out the uncalled-for deaths from poison and fear which these sorcerers, and particularly old Tata-Koa, cause. Human life is the cheapest thing in New Guinea today. The fear of death hangs over the native from birth to death. The easiest and quickest way to bring them under control is to banish that fear. Once we convince them that whether they live or die does not hinge upon the sorcerer's whim, we go a long way.

"To get there we've got to convince the sorcerer first, to put fear of the government into him so that he hesitates a long time before he resorts to powdered bamboo, poisoned sticks, stupefying roots and other means of murder. We've done it other places and it can be done in Mekeo—if we start with Tata-Koa.

"I'm putting it up to you, Featherstone, to find a way, just as I've put it up to a dozen others before you. I don't care how you go about it so long as you don't shoot Tata-Koa, which suggests itself as a logical method, or embroil yourself in a fight. That's all, I think, except one thing. Even if you fail it doesn't necessarily mean that you have to get out of the service—unless you want to."

AN OPPORTUNITY to surprise Tata-Koa in some of his sorcery presented itself to Featherstone some weeks later when word came to an inland village where he was camped that a man was lying severely injured in a hut at Oriro Petana, fifteen miles away.

"The man refused to pay Tata-Koa for making *puri-puri*," said a constable. "Instead he ran away. Tata-Koa sent his pet crocodile to find the man. It caught him trying to cross a river and bit off his foot. At least, so the people say," he added, hastily. "Being a government man and a policeman, I do not believe in sorcerers."

"The man will die if he doesn't get treatment," said Featherstone.

"Oh, no," was the prompt reply. "He has sent for Tata-Koa to come and save him. His people will have to pay many pigs and coconuts and 'New Guinea somethings' to the sorcerer now."

Within fifteen minutes Featherstone and his men had taken the road to Oriro Petana. By forced marching they arrived at midnight. The village was quiet. With characteristic indifference to the sufferings of a man not of their village, the natives had retired.

From a hut at the far end, however, came sounds that reminded the patrol officer unpleasantly of a hospital to which he had been attached during the war. Accompanied only by the corporal, he strode down the wide village street, mounted the platform and looked in the doorway.

Upon a pallet of dry grass lay a man who moaned and groaned and tossed unceasingly. At his side crouched an old man, lean and wrinkled. He chanted monotonously and fed twigs to a tiny fire on a little mound of earth at his elbow.

"Tata-Koa," said the corporal in an awe-stricken whisper.

At mention of his name, even in that low tone, the old sorcerer looked up. Abruptly his chanting ceased, his eyes bulged and his dropped jaw revealed red and almost toothless gums. Slowly he got to his feet.

Featherstone screwed his monocle into place and looked the sorcerer over from head to foot. He made no attempt to conceal the scorn and contempt which he felt. The startled look on Tata-Koa's wrinkled features gave way to one of anger. His eyelids narrowed and through the tiny slits darted vicious little gleams at the white man. His long figures, like claws, curled and uncurled as if he meditated burying them in the throat of this man who had dared to disturb him.

Featherstone dropped the monocle and stepped to the side of the pallet. Evidently the crocodile's victim was delirious, for his moaning and tossing had not ceased. About his bare leg a rude tourniquet of pliant vines had been fastened tightly below the knee, shutting off the flow of blood into the injured member. So far as the patrol officer could tell, nothing else had been done.

"Corporal, start a big fire outside," he ordered. "Make water hot, plenty of water. Send the medicine kit to me."

Tata-Koa had not budged. Featherstone addressed him for the first time.

"Get out," he said and waved his hand toward the doorway.

Tata-Koa glowered vindictively, but made no move to obey the unmistakable gesture which had accompanied the words. Promptly the patrol officer seized him by the shoulder, whirled him around and propelled him through the doorway to the platform outside.

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During the few minutes since the patrol had arrived in the village the street had filled with natives, awakened by the noise as the constables set about carrying out their leader's orders. Now they were gathered just beyond the platform, curious to see and hear what was going on. They clucked and chattered excitedly when Tata-Koa went to the bamboo flooring in an ungainly sprawl as Featherstone gave him a final push and went back into the hut.

"Put guards around the hut and keep the people out," he said curtly when the corporal appeared with the medicine kit. "When the water is hot, bring it to me."

Then he dropped to his knees, replaced the tourniquet of vines with a wider one of bandaging linen just above the ankle and massaged the lower part of the leg until the blood came back into it. When the hot water arrived he washed and sterilized a tin basin and a small scalpel, trimmed away the rough edges of the foot where the crocodile's teeth had sheared through, washed the wounded member thoroughly in permanganate and bandaged it after it had been plastered with salve.

"Get carriers, make a litter and detail two constables to escort this man to the mission hospital at Yule Island," he said to the corporal who had stood by, holding a hurricane lamp so that its light was shed to the best advantage.

Then he washed his hands, rolled down his sleeves and stepped out upon the platform.

The buzzing sound of the villagers' voices changed to a chorus of angry shouts. The corporal, telling the village constable to pick out carriers for the litter, had stirred up a hornets' nest. Although they had no special interest in the injured man, who neither belonged to the village nor had blood kin there, they resented the plan to remove him to the hospital before consulting his family. No Papuan thinks of making any move of importance without learning what his relatives think of it.

"Sorry, but the man will lose his leg, perhaps die, if he doesn't have proper care," said Featherstone when the corporal told him. "Carry on."

He spread the handkerchief upon which he had dried his hands on the platform, put up his monocle and calmly eyed the menacing throng until the hastily constructed stretcher arrived.

Tata-Koa chose this moment to make a play to save his face before his people. He leaped upon the platform, bellowing wildly, and waved his arms as if to incite the villagers into attacking the white man and his constables. Coolly the patrol officer booted him off the platform.

"Tell Tata-Koa if he is still here when the detail starts for Yule Island I'll put the handcuffs on him and send him along to jail," he said to the corporal.

When, a few minutes later, he looked around to see if it would be necessary to make good on his threat the old sorcerer had disappeared and so had Featherstone's handkerchief.

"Be careful now, *taubada* (master)," said the corporal. "It is not good that the sorcerer should have something you have had in your hands. He will use it to make *puri-puri* against you and pay back."

"Silly rot," retorted Featherstone. "I'm not afraid of any sorcerer."

AS HE followed his men along the trail that afternoon, however, he wondered whether he had not acted hastily in humiliating the sorcerer so pointedly. True, the forced march to Oriro Petana, the first aid treatment of the injured man and the order for his removal to a hospital had been inspired solely by a desire to save his life. Tata-Koa had chosen to interfere and had paid the penalty. Unwittingly Featherstone had brought about an issue. Whether the white man or the sorcerer would in the future be supreme in Mekeo hinged now upon the showdown which the patrol officer knew must come before he returned to the coast—and he had no plan to break the spell which Tata-Koa seemed to have cast over the natives.

His thoughts were interrupted by a commotion among the constables ahead of him. They leaped to one side or other of the narrow path with sharp, startled exclamations and Waimura, his orderly, charged upon him and sent him spinning into the undergrowth.

"Snake, *taubada*, snake," he yelled excitedly and sprang nimbly into the air, seized an overhanging branch and drew himself into a tree by the roadside.

Featherstone, under the impetus of the constable's shove, had fallen upon his back. Now he rolled over, preparatory to getting upon his feet. The snake, a mottled thing

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of green and black and some five feet long, was sliding down the trail and, thinking to let it go past without attracting its attention, the patrol officer lay motionless.

Abruptly the snake changed its course and, to Featherstone's horror, came directly toward him! His hand shot backward to the holster at his hip and came back with his revolver, cocked. He raised himself slightly, dug his elbow into the ground for a prop and, as the snake came to a stop, shot off its drawn-back head before it could launch the strike that would have buried its fangs in his body. So close was the reptile that its writhing tail lashed his putteed legs as he scrambled to his feet.

"Why didn't you chaps kill the bally thing?" he demanded as Waimura dropped from his perch and the other constables somewhat shamefacedly came back.

"No kill snake, marster," they chorussed and Waimura added: "We plenty 'fraid snake. Binandere boy no 'fraid, plenty kill."

Featherstone fumbled for his monocle and bent down to inspect the snake.

"Poisonous?" he asked.

"Plenty poison, marster."

The patrol officer scarcely heard the words. He had seen something which puzzled him. A few inches back of where the head had been the sinuous form was circled by a loop of lawyer-vine and to it was knotted a two-foot length of the same pliant growth, as if at some time the reptile had been held on leash.

From Waimura's lips burst a sharp ejaculation.

"*Puri-puri*," he cried.

"*Puri-puri*," echoed Featherstone, perplexed. "You mean sorcery?"

"*Io, taubada*," confirmed the other. "Suppose you make him one feller sorcerer wild along you, him make *puri-puri* along bush, snake kill you."

"I see," said Featherstone thoughtfully. "Then this thing was intended to kill me, eh? Tata-Koa's idea, I guess. But how could the snake know which one of us he was supposed to kill? Why didn't he attack one of you?"

Waimura, able to understand though he was, found himself unable to frame his reply in English and Featherstone knew only a few words of Motuan, the native dialect that is the go-between of white man and black in Papua.

"*Taubada*, you stop along me I show," he said after a bit.

Like hound with his nose to trail, he bent low and began to back-track the snake by the signs, almost invisible to the white man, it had left in its wake. At the point where it had emerged from the undergrowth into the path he shouted something to his fellows and they plunged into the bushes and began to circle about out of sight but not of hearing. A moment later one of them called and Featherstone followed the orderly in that direction.

In a tiny clearing an earthenware pot rested upon the still smoldering remains of a twig fire. The vessel was warm to the touch and knocking off the sticks which remained of those which apparently had acted as a cover for the pot and been held in place by a large flat stone, Featherstone started back in surprize.

At the bottom of the pot lay a handkerchief and the embroidered "F" in one corner told him that it was his own!

"The handkerchief which disappeared from the hut platform in Oriro Petana when I spread it out to dry," he exclaimed.

"*Io, taubada*," agreed the orderly. "Tata-Koa make talk he pay back along you."

"Yes, but how did he do it and what has this handkerchief to do with the snake?"

Waimura elected to demonstrate. He stripped from his waist the turkey-red sash of the armed constabulary, folded it tightly lengthwise, wrapped it with lawyer-vine and had a passable semblance of a snake. He knotted one end of another vine about the pseudo-snake and carried the other end to a peg which he drove into the ground, and securely tied vine to peg. Then with a long stick he picked up the sash-snake and dropped it into the pot on top of the handkerchief. He covered the pot and made a pretense of building up the fire.

"Him one feller snake get plenty hot, plenty hurt," he explained and contorted his body violently to picture the writhings of the reptile as the increasing heat tortured and agonized it.

Then with the stick he knocked off the covering of the pot and lifted out the sash.

"Smell along you on cloth," he said. "Suppose bimeby you come, snake catch smell along you, think him plenty hurt some more, him bite you, you die."

Dramatically he acted out the tragedy,

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severing the restraining vine that would have permitted a real snake, catching the scent which he had associated with his tortures in the pot, to glide away and attack the person to whom that scent belonged.

"I see," said Featherstone. "So that's why Tata-Koa stole my handkerchief. Clever, I'd say. But how does it come, Waimura, that you understand this bit of sorcery?"

The constable, winding his sash about him, grinned, revealing the blackened teeth and bright red gums of the betelnut chewer.

"Long time behind," he said, "Waimura him plenty big sorcerer. *Puri-puri* New Guinea fashion no good along *puri-puri* white man fashion. Waimura stop along jail. No like. More better be govamen' policeman, stop sorcery."

Featherstone nodded and gave the word that sent the patrol back to the trail. The orderly's words had given him his idea. If in Waimura's case New Guinea sorcery had failed to hold its own with the white man it might work out the same way with old Tata-Koa. He'd give the sorcerer who had sought to bring him to a horrible death a taste of "*puri-puri*, white man fashion" and see what happened.

IN TIME the patrol came to Kivori, the village of Tata-Koa. By dint of speaking slowly and repeating often the simplest words he could muster from his vocabulary Featherstone had given the constables an inkling of what he had in mind. When they understood what their white leader proposed to do they guffawed loudly, then as their imaginations began to work overtime they rolled on the ground in paroxysms of mirth.

Featherstone had coached Waimura to assist him and the ex-sorcerer had proved an apt pupil. Taking stock of the contents of his medicine kit, the patrol officer had decided its few simple remedies would do.

Featherstone smiled and the constables grinned appreciatively as they approached Kivori. Words whispered into the ears of a native here and there along the way had been broadcasted throughout Mekeo and grown in the passing from mouth to mouth. It seemed that the entire district had business in Kivori that day. The trail by which the patrol arrived was thronged with men, women and children. They stepped respectfully aside or scuttled timidly into the bush as the white man passed. The curiosity and eagerness with which they followed into the already crowded village was pardonable. They had heard that Featherstone was a "number one sorcerer" and that he proposed to fling a challenge at Tata-Koa by showing his powers in the village of the sorcerer himself.

Featherstone halted his men at the rest-house for friendly visitors and climbed on the platform. His eyes, sweeping the mob, fell upon Tata-Koa standing near in the front rank. The sorcerer glared at him belligerently and almost defiantly fingered the great necklace which he wore. Then he said something aloud which infected the natives with laughter.

"What did that man say?" asked Featherstone and Waimura interpreted.

"Tata-Koa make talk mosquitoes *kaikai* (eat) white man suppose he no make *puri-puri* quick-quick," he said.

Featherstone, mentally blessing the vial of oil of citronella reposing in his hip pocket, laughed sneeringly. The sorcerer had played into his hands and given him an opportunity to score in a way he had not planned. He had not intended to stage his theatrical exhibition until the morrow. He wanted time for the curiosity of the natives to become whetted, for Tata-Koa to boast if he wished. Now, however, he knew that he could not choose a better time.

He flipped off his hat, bent over and pulled his shirt off. Instantly his body was covered with the buzzing pests and only with difficulty could he restrain the impulse to slap and brush at them as their needle-like bills punctured his skin.

"Tell the people that the white man will go into the hut and make *puri-puri*," he said to the orderly. "When he comes back the mosquitoes will not bite him."

Then he dashed inside the hut and, while Waimura translated, anointed himself with the citronella.

Surprized cries greeted him when he dramatically stalked out upon the platform again and stood with folded arms before them. Upon his bare skin there was not a single mosquito.

"Let Tata-Koa drive the mosquitoes from himself," challenged Featherstone and the sorcerer, who had edged close to the platform to assure himself that it was

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indeed the white man's skin and not a garment that the mosquitoes shunned, backed precipitately away when Waimura hurled the words at him.

Carelessly the patrol officer reached for his monocle and, grimacing, fixed it in his eye. As he had expected, the natives found it irresistibly amusing and their laughter was Waimura's cue to shout at them that they must not make fun of the white man's charm.

"Bring sticks that the master may set them afire with his charm," he cried. "Bring dirt and he will make it to burn. Bring water and he will burn that, also."

They scurried about to do his bidding. A joint of bamboo, containing water, handfuls of earth, scraped up in the village street, twigs and small sticks were handed up to the platform. Upon its edge, where all might see in the bright sunlight, the orderly banked the dirt in a small mound and quickly laid the twigs and sticks crisscross as for a fire, with a bit of frayed bark fiber beneath.

Featherstone stepped up close and while his left hand made mystic passes and he attracted attention to his lips by chanting: "Taffy was a Welshman, Taffy was a thief," the fingers of his right hand were twiddling the monocle, catching a sharp sun ray and concentrating it to the burning point upon the fiber.

"Ah, ah, ah," burst excitedly from the natives' lips as they saw it smolder, then break into a tiny blaze which caught the twigs and sticks and set them afire. They gazed in awe upon the white man, who had stood up and left the feeding of the fire to a constable.

Into half a coconut-shell Waimura had poured a few spoonfuls of water from the bamboo. He handed the shell to Tata-Koa so suddenly that the sorcerer had no opportunity to refuse.

"Throw it upon the fire," snapped Waimura and the old man, urged on by the shouts of his fellows, flung it upon the blaze.

"As you see," cried Waimura, "Tata-Koa throws water upon a fire and it would go out were it not rebuilt with dry wood. But when the white man makes *puri-puri*, watch."

He handed to Featherstone another half-shell. Under cover of the excitement a constable had poured into it a quantity of pure alcohol from the medicine chest. Again the patrol officer went through the motions of making magic and cast the alcohol upon the fire. Instantly it flared up brightly.

"He burns water, he burns water," bellowed the spectators and drew away from the platform, frightened but reluctant to go until they had seen all that had been promised.

"Wait," commanded the orderly, "you shall see him burn earth, too. Does Tata-Koa wish to show what happens when he casts earth upon a fire?"

"It is not good that the people should see a sorcerer make magic," retorted the old man and into his eyes had crept a troubled look.

Quickly Waimura stooped, picked up a handful of earth and flung it upon the fire to show that nothing would happen. Then he reached out and poured into Featherstone's cupped hand what, so far as appearances went, was more dirt.

As Featherstone cast into the flames the gunpowder which beforehand had been removed from half a dozen rifle cartridges and it flared up with a loud puff and much smoke, he turned his back upon the startled, shouting natives and donned his shirt. Then he dropped upon the ground and started through the crowd.

"He is going to set the river afire and burn up your lands," cried Waimura. "The people of Mekeo have chosen to defy the govamen' and obey Tata-Koa and the great white sorcerer has been sent to pay back."

"No! no!" came back a chorus of agonized protests. "We will pay the white man to leave the river and our lands alone."

Dumfounded as he had been, Tata-Koa had been quick to recover his wits. Now, in their great fear that they were to see the river set afire and their villages go up in smoke, he saw an opportunity to turn the tables upon the white man.

"Kill him!" he bellowed, waving his arms wildly. "Kill the white sorcerer who would burn Kivori and make its people homeless!"

"Stop!"

Waimura stood upon the edge of the platform and thundered out the word. Featherstone was edging his way back toward the resthouse and the protection of the rifles which his men had brought into a position

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of readiness. Through his brain was running the fear that he had gone too far, that in his plan to startle the natives, he had started something that he could not finish except by force. He had not expected Tata-Koa to assume the offensive.

"The white sorcerer," said Waimura, shouting to make himself heard, "is wild because some one of Mekeo has sought to kill him by sending a snake to bite him. He will not set the river on fire or burn up the lands if the people will deliver to him to do with as he sees fit the person who did this thing."

Having delivered himself as he had been coached, Waimura nodded to the white man.

"Him altogether finish, *taubada*," he said in a low tone.

To one side the chiefs and headmen of Mekeo had gathered to discuss the demands of the white man. One of them came forward presently and addressed Waimura.

"What the white sorcerer asks is fair and just," he said. "But how can we deliver to him the guilty person when we do not know him?"

"That," said the constable, "is easily discovered. Let the people stand before the white man. He will make *puri-puri* and the one who has done this thing will make himself known by crying out."

"It is well," said the man after a bit. "We agree."

Featherstone climbed back upon the platform, and squatted at its edge. Below him the natives, silent and perturbed, fastened their eyes upon his face.

"Eeenie, meenie, minee, mo," began the patrol officer and at each word his left forefinger stabbed the air toward one of the shrinking natives. Surreptitiously his right hand was twiddling the monocle, focussing a beam to the burning point. And, when he had it just right, he turned it upon the body of old Tata-Koa.

With a howl of surprized anguish the sorcerer clapped his hands to his seared flesh.

"Tata-Koa is guilty," cried Waimura, then broke off to turn away and hide a smile.

For with remarkable presence of mind, considering the unexpected thing that had befallen him, the sorcerer was legging it down the village street toward the jungle as rapidly as he could drive his aged and withered limbs.

PATROL OFFICER FEATHERSTONE, arising in the early dawn and stepping out of the resthouse upon the platform in front, discovered that already he had a caller.

"*Taubada*," said Tata-Koa and bowed his head.

Then with hands that shook he slipped off his prized necklace and put it over the white man's head.

"He make talk," translated Waimura, who had come up, "that more better *taubada* catchem necklace. *Puri-puri*, white man fashion, more strong than *puri-puri*, New Guinea fashion. *Taubada* is number one sorcerer, Tata-Koa is number two sorcerer. Tata-Koa like know what happen along him now."

"Oh," said Featherstone, as he put up his monocle to scrutinize the gift, "tell the beggar he's going to be the village constable."

FAKES AND PUZZLES

by Hugh Pendexter

MAN of normal mentality would suppose the faking of Indian pictographs to be about the last bit of mischief to occupy his fellow beings. Yet numerous frauds of the character have been perpetrated either from some moral perversion that delights in a hoax, or from a desire to sell the bogus for something ancient and therefore valuable. Garrick Mallery in his "Picture-Writing of the American Indian" devotes a short chapter to these frauds, and if the faking is to be deplored some of the translations resulting almost incline one to forgive the perpetrator.

The most celebrated "find" to be questioned is that of the Grave Creek stone, said to have been taken from Grave Creek

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mound, prehistoric Indian work near Moundsville, Marshall County, West Virginia. The stone was divided by four lines, practically parallel, which separated a bit more than a half of the surface into five fields of approximate width. Within three of these fields are twenty-four characters, the lower half being occupied by a crude suggestion of a human face in profile attached to what resembles a dagger blade.

Mallery says that experts have pronounced the twenty-four characters to be alphabetic and the lower one to be hieroglyphic. Schoolcraft held that twenty-two of the characters were alphabetic, with two in doubt.

Four of the characters were pronounced to be ancient Greek by one scholar. Another scholar declared four to be Etruscan. Yet another announced that five were Runic. Ancient Gallic got six. Old Erse drew down seven. Phenician took ten. Old British forged ahead with fourteen. And Celtiberic distanced the field by being awarded sixteen. The scholars would have needed sixty-six characters to supply all these claims.

M. Levy Bing reported before the "Congress of Americanists" at Nancy that there were twenty-three Canaanite letters in the picture; and his translation was, "What thou sayest, thou dost impose it; thou shinest in thine impetuous clan and rapid chamois." If any reader of *Adventure* knows a niftier rendition of ancient inscriptions than shining in "rapid chamois" let him announce it now, or forever afterward hold his peace.

According to M. Maurice Schwab (Mallery does not state to whom he reported) the tongue in the stone has this to say: "The chief of emigration who reached these places (or this island) has fixed these statutes forever." Doubtless M. Schwab had Ellis Island in mind and "statutes" is a typographical error for Statue of Liberty. This would make it as plain as Horace Greeley's letters to the young man seeking information on turnip-culture.

Comes M. Oppert and satisfies the lover of dramatic values by translating: "The grave of one who was assassinated here. May God to avenge him strike his murderer, cutting off the hand of his existence!"

After "rapid chamois" we find "the hand of his existence" tame; but it's good, and we can only regret that the immortal Twain did not review the whole tremendous discussion.

The Ohio Archeological and Historical Society in 1877 reported eight findings, which, condensed, held that the inscription need not be considered alphabetical; if so it can not be referred to any known language; it is precisely of such character as would result from an ordinary attempt to manufacture an inscription; it is within the capacity of any laborer of ordinary intelligence who may have been working on the mound; it was not properly studied to determine whether it was of recent manufacture or not; evidence that it came from the mound is not conclusive; until its authenticity is established it can not be regarded as evidence of the character, ethnical relationship or intellectual culture of the builders of the mound. In 1872 Whittlesey expressed his belief that it was a forgery.

Another "find," which was quickly exploded, was in a mound at Kinderhook, Pike County, Illinois. It consisted of six copper plates bearing inscriptions that strongly resembled Chinese. And well they might when it was discovered that the village blacksmith had planted the plates after copying on them characters from the lid of a Chinese tea-chest.

Stones marked with Hebrew letters were industriously planted near Newark, Ohio; and one such was exhumed in 1865 and caused a commotion until the forger 'fessed up.

Newark was quite a center for remarkable "finds." In 1860 one David Wyrick found a tablet showing the face of Moses, his name in Hebrew beneath, and the ten commandments somewhat condensed. Mr. Wyrick was a zealous believer in the theory that the Hebrews built the mounds. Before this find could get well under way a Hebrew Bible was found in Mr. Wyrick's room.

Butler County, Ohio, also furnished a grooved stone ax, lettered in English, and stating that in 1689 a certain Captain H. Argill had passed that way and concealed two hundred bags of gold near a spring. The fact that the inscriber failed to state whether they were big or ordinary-sized bags, plus the very obvious fact that the lettering had been recently done, discouraged any extensive hunting for the spring.

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The TURN of the WHEEL

By John Webb

Author of "The Most Hated Men," "That Crooked Smile," etc.

THE night wind, cool and dry, droned steadily down the mountainside. It sang through the tree-tops and whirled about the little shack in the clearing half-way down. It swept down the mountainside in a steady stream, whining monotonously as it poured into the valley below.

A man sat hunched over a table in the shack, a sheet of paper before him and a stub of a pencil between his fingers. He was writing, spasmodically, but with great concentration, and he chewed on the pencil-stub and frowned as he thought. Overhead a smoky oil-lamp swayed in the occasional gusts that came in through the doorway.

He was a young man, sandy-haired and gray-eyed, and there was about him that indefinable something which denotes the city man. He was lean almost to emaciation, and his cheeks, their pallor hidden beneath a coat of tan, were lean and drawn. His mouth was tired, and it seemed inclined to droop, but there was a dogged set to his chin that held it firm. His eyes held the impression of weariness battling with grim determination.

He was writing a letter, and as he framed the closing sentences he murmured the words aloud.

"O'course I ain't had much luck so far, but 'at's jus' why I think I aughta have some soon. I been over 'most every inch of th' land I got down in th' valley, and ain't found nothin' yet, but I'm gonna give 'er another try tomorrow. I don't blame Bowerman—I guess maybe I ain't been goin' at it th' right way. Ever'thing's all right, I guess, and I guess maybe we'll have that poultry-farm down in Maryland yet. Th' only thing that gets my goat is this darn wind; it howls and howls all day and night. It's enough to set a guy nuts. But I won't mind that if I strike luck tomorrow. Can't have bum luck all th' time, can we? Well, so long Pop. Give my love to Mom, and tell 'er things look rosy and——"

Here the young man's voice grew husky, and his tired mouth drooped a little at the corners. He finished his letter hurriedly, and slipped it in an envelope.

"——!" he said suddenly, and he kicked angrily at the table-leg. "What am I gonna tell 'em next time?" He looked at the letter before him and shook his head despairingly.

A chance swirl of wind came in through the open door. It circled the room and rustled the paper in the young man's hand. He shivered, and going to the door, slammed it shut. Then he came back and sat, his hands deep in his pockets and his chin sunk upon his breast, staring for a long, long time at nothing. Outside the wind droned its monotonous, never-ceasing chant.

NEXT afternoon, on the bridge deck of the small freighter *Hawk*, snug in her dock in the harbor, the young man stood uneasily, and with a certain amount of deference, before Captain McGuire.

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Behind the captain an old Chinaman, leathery-faced and wrinkled, his countenance as expressionless as the sky overhead, sat gazing off at the distant blue-gray mountains that went straight up from the bay. Over the bow the town of Port au Prince shimmered in the sweltering heat of the afternoon sun, but here, in the shade of the big awning, cooled by the trade-breeze that swept over and down the grim old mountains to the north and east, was rest and comfort.

"If you will, captain, I'll be much obliged to you," said the young man, and he held out a letter. "I was goin' to ask Mr. Scott to do it, but he's ashore. Jus' drop it in the box on the pier when you get to New Yawk."

Captain McGuire nodded shortly, and he took the letter from the young man's hand. He looked curiously at him; then he looked at the superscription on the letter.

"This is to your father, isn't it?" asked the captain without apology. "Your name is Doyle?"

"Yes," said the other, "Ernie—Ernest Doyle. "I wanted to tell my people about—about up there."

He waved his hand at the distant hills and shook his head.

"And what do you think of it now?" asked the captain. "Up there, I mean."

"Well, I guess I pulled a bone—or else I'm not goin' at it the right way. I been over every inch of that darn valley—th' claim's in th' valley, you know; I sleep up on th' hill to get away from the mosquitos, an' I ain't found a single speck o' gold. I ain't givin' up yet, though."

"Who said there was gold there, anyway?"

"Feller I bought the land from. Bowerman, his name was—Jack Bowerman. I went over to th' big scrap, you see, and when I went I started a fifteen dollar allotment to my mother. When I came back they hands me th' whole darn thing—three hundred and sixty dollars, it was. Said they hadn't needed it—couple old fakers, they are."

His eyes lighted with pride, but they dimmed again into despair as he continued:

"And with what I had saved up myself, I had about six hundred bucks. A friend o' mind—he was my buddy on the other side—had got a job with the Trading-Company in Port au Prince, and he wrote an' told me if I'd come down he'd get me somethin'. So I packed up and came. I wanted to save up enough to put my mother and the old man in th' poultry business in Maryland, where they come from. They came to New Yawk when I was a kid. All my life I been hearing 'em talk about chickens an' ducks an'—an' things like that. They're always makin' plans, but they never can get enough dough to go back with. Well, anyway, on the boat I meets Bowerman, and he told me about this mine o' his. He said it was full o' gold, and he'd work it 'imself, only he was in bad with the gover'ment here. So, well, after thinkin' it over I bought it—for six hundred bucks. It might be there, but all *I* can find is mud, thick, oily muck."

Captain McGuire's thin lips drew up in a one-sided smile.

"So you bought this wonderful gold-mine for six hundred dollars," he said.

His lean smile broadened, and the one corner of his mouth lifted higher.

"You should be able to get *some* mine for that."

Doyle, not noticing the captain's sarcasm, stared disconsolately down at his feet.

"And you dig and dig, and don't find anything but——"

"But oily muck," broke in a quiet voice from behind the captain.

The old Chinaman had spoken casually, and he had not taken his eyes from their study of the distant mountain-range.

"Yes," said the youth. "Even the creek that runs through my land is so scummy on top that I hate to go near it."

The captain looked from Doyle to the Chinaman, then he began rolling a cigaret from the "makings" on the rail before him. He was a strange little man, Captain McGuire; dark, taciturn, sarcastic. He had the name, whether justly or not, of being very hard and very cold. Shang Toy, the crafty old Port au Prince merchant, was his only friend.

"Why don't you quit?" asked Captain McGuire when his cigaret was lighted.

"Because I'm not a quitter!"

The young man snapped his jaws together determinedly.

"I believe there's gold there and I'm gonna keep pluggin' away till I find it. I just won't quit."

The captain looked at Doyle closely, and then, as if to himself, he nodded.

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"But suppose, in spite of your pluggin', you don't hit? What then?"

"I don't like to think of that. I don't suppose I could sell the land for anything like I paid for it—there's more land around here now than anybody wants. I couldn't get that job with the Trading-Company either, because my buddy has been transferred to Havana. There wouldn't be any chicken farm in Maryland for us, that's one sure thing."

"I suppose you would get rid of it quick if you found there was no gold there."

"I'd give the darn thing away! I'd get rid of it and beat it for New Yawk as soon as I could."

Captain McGuire stared straight before him.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said after some thought. "I'll take an option on that claim of yours—a thirty day option."

"An option?" The young man looked up in surprize.

"Yes. I'll give you fifty dollars for the option. Here is the agreement: I'll give you fifty dollars for holding the land thirty days—I'll be back in Port au Prince by then. If, at the end of thirty days, I don't want the land, you keep the fifty. If I want the land, you must sell it to me, do you understand? I agree to pay you just what it cost you—six hundred dollars."

"But—but——"

"Oh, of course, if you make your gold-strike in the meanwhile, the deal is off. You keep your claim and I get back my fifty. All right?"

Doyle nodded stupidly.

"I guess you know what you're doin' capt'n; I'll be damned if I do. Write it up an' I'll sign it."

"No, we won't put it in writing. It's a verbal agreement between you and me—man to man—on our honor, see? Shang Toy here can forget he heard it. Just remember that you are to sell to nobody but me. I'll give you the fifty dollars now."

Doyle stepped back and held up his hands protestingly.

"No you won't capt'n," he said hurriedly. "Your word is as good as mine."

"Good. I'll come up to see you inside of thirty days, if I want the land. If I don't want it I'll send the fifty."

A new hope dawning within him, the boy turned and started toward the ladder leading down. He walked with a slight limp; a German bayonet had torn the ligaments of one leg.

"So long, capt'n," he called back. "See you in a month. Thanks for takin' care of my letter."

The black-haired, black-eyed little sea captain merely nodded.

When Doyle had gone Captain McGuire turned to Shang Toy. They were friends, these two. The distrust and aversion which others felt toward them drew them together. Only to the old Chinaman would Captain McGuire drop his mask of derision.

"Think of it!" he exclaimed, smiling his thin, sour smile. "A gold-mine—in Haiti! And for six hundred dollars!"

Shang Toy looked at the captain, and, in his own way, a puckering of the wrinkles about the corners of his eyes, smiled back.

"Nothing so surprising about that, little Captain," said Shang Toy. "Stranger sales are made in your own New York."

"That's right," admitted the captain. "Grant's Tomb and the Obelisk, in Central Park, have been sold time and again."

"Exactly. So why not a gold-mine in Haiti? We know, of course, that there really is gold in Haiti, but it assays so little to the ton that it costs more to mine than it is worth. That boy was very easily taken in."

"He's full of confidence, anyway. Seems to think his luck will turn. He is a sticker."

Shang Toy nodded blandly.

"He is a sticker, as you say, Captain Mac. And, after all, who can tell? Life is one big game of chance. We never know what is waiting for us around the next bend in the road. Your Broadway is strewn with wrecks of men who bet on 'sure things,' while others, 'on top of the world,' don't know what threw them there. As in roulette, the ball of luck, tomorrow, or the next day, may drop into the pocket marked—McGuire—Shang Toy—Doyle. Who can tell? By perseverance, pluck, determination, we can tempt Luck, but we cannot force it. The final result lays with the wheel of Life."

Captain Mac nodded slowly.

"It's the turn of the wheel," he said.

"It is the turn of the wheel," repeated Shang Toy.

At break of day the next morning the *Hawk* steamed out of the harbor on her way to New York.

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TWO weeks later, in Cape Haitien, strange news came to the ears of Jack Bowerman, who was living in grand style on the proceeds of his last business ventures. It was whispered about that Captain McGuire, of the *Hawk*, had taken an option on Ernie Doyle's "gold-mine." Bowerman, in spite of a deep-rooted aversion to honest business methods, or, as was more probable, because of this aversion, was very shrewd and very clever. When the news reached him that Captain Mac, the hard-headed little buck shipmaster, was interested in the property which he, Bowerman, had considered worthless, he began to think deeply.

"An option, eh? Captain Mac. H'm, something is in the wind. One-Two Mac's no fool. What can it be? Could he want the land for something else—pineapples, or coconuts, or coffee, or tobacco, or cotton? H'm, no-o; that piece of land isn't big enough to raise anything on—and make it pay. It isn't fit for agriculture anyway, there's no regular rain-fall. And what the —— would he want to pay six hundred dollars for it for, when he can get land all around it for about half that? Well, there's something up, that's sure—and they say old Shang's got his finger in it too. Shang don't make any mistakes. Did my foot slip on that deal? Did I let a million-dollar bet get away from me? Did I sell a *gold-mine?* Gosh!"

He reasoned the thing out thoroughly, looked at it from all angles, turned it over and over in his mind, and the more he thought about it the more he censured himself for his carelessness.

"I'm a piker," he told himself. "Six hundred dollars looked so big to me that I couldn't see a million dollars behind it."

With an awful fear in his breast he hurried to Port au Prince as fast as his little roadster could travel. He eased casually into the capital and spent a day in making the rounds of the cafés and clubs, and other places where scraps of information might be turned up, never asking outright, but adroitly bringing the conversation around to the subject he was interested in. He learned little; the American colony seemed as mystified by Captain Mac's action, and as much in the dark concerning his plans, as Bowerman was. Doyle had merely mentioned that he had given Captain Mac an option, and that the price agreed upon was six hundred dollars.

Shang Toy, the mysterious old yellow man who dabbled in Haitian politics and Haitian financial affairs from behind his camouflage of being a peaceful curio-shop proprietor, when questioned on this newest subject for speculation, had shaken his head, blinked his almond eyes, and looked vacantly into space.

"I know nothing of a gold-mine—of any gold-mine," had been his invariable answer to all queries. "If you would like to look at some pongee, pure silk-pongee cloth, beautifully woven, one seventy-five, gold, a yard— No?"

He would bow courteously.

So Bowerman, despairing of arriving at a solution of the problem, decided to go direct to Doyle. He hired a horse, and, in the forenoon of his second day in Port au Prince, made the twenty-eight mile trip to Doyle's claim in the near-by hills.

The news of Bowerman's departure for the hills came immediately to Shang Toy, as all news invariably did, but the old Chinaman went on with his small affairs as if interested in nothing on earth but Chinese and Haitian curios and commodities. Nevertheless, when an employe of the West Indies Petroleum and Petroleum Products Company, a geologist, in Haiti for a speculative survey of "prospects," left town two hours after Bowerman, traveling the same road, it became whispered about that "old Shang," in spite of his apparent unconcern, had something to do with the scientist's hurried departure.

Upon his arrival in the little valley Bowerman found Doyle busily cleaning out a boring with a miner's "spoon" before packing it with dynamite for a blast. The young man dropped his tool in surprize, and stood erect.

"Hullo!" he said none too cordially. "Why the visit?"

"How are you making out?" asked Bowerman, looking around at the numerous signs of amateurish blasting. "Strike it yet?"

"No, an' I've about reached the point where I don't expect to."

Doyle held out his hands helplessly and shook his head.

"Guess the blame thing's a bloomer."

"You don't say!" exclaimed Bowerman in genuine surprize. "Well, well!"

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He searched Doyle's face with his eyes.

At length, finding no sign of deception, and satisfied that Doyle was telling the truth, Bowerman slid from his mount and placed his hand sympathetically on the boy's shoulder.

"Too bad, too bad," he said. "Not a single streak, eh?"

"Not a grain."

Bowerman was as much in the dark now as before, but, in his own words, he felt certain that "there was a nigger in the woodpile somewhere."

"One-Two Mac's no fool," he told himself again. "Neither is old Shang."

"Did you see any silver?" he asked. "Or maybe copper?"

"Wouldn't know it if I did," answered Doyle truthfully.

A thought, a thought in harmony with his own business methods, came suddenly to Bowerman.

"Has anybody been up to see you?" he asked conversationally.

"No," answered Doyle.

"Captain McGuire, or Shang Toy, or——"

"Nobody."

"Nobody at all been poking around—kind of looking the place over?"

"No, darn it, no!"

Bowerman, his theory squashed, subsided. But he wasn't a man to give up until he was satisfied he could learn no more. He knew very little about mining, hardly more than Doyle did, but he did know that there were more ways than one of getting gold out of the ground.

"How about that creek?" he asked, pointing to a narrow, sluggish stream which ran along one edge of Doyle's land. "Have you tried working that with a pan?"

"Pan? What d'you mean, pan?" Doyle shook his head to show his failure to understand the question. "The creek's so darn dirty that I've been afraid to go near it. There might be some kind o' disease in it, it's so fulla oil or somethin'. I'll try it though, if you think——"

"What!" Bowerman was staring at him with startled eyes.

"I say I'll try it if you——"

"What did you say about it being—being dirty?" Bowerman was trying hard to control his agitation.

"Oh, it's all scummy on top. What's the matter? Do you think it might be malaria or somethin'? Come over an' look at it?"

"Oh," mumbled Bowerman, gathering himself together. "Oh, yes, let's look at it. It might be something terrible."

"It wasn't that way when I first come here," explained Doyle as they made their way to the little stream. "Seems like it started about the time I begun blastin'."

Bowerman said nothing, but he averted his eyes as if to hide his thoughts.

They stood on the bank of the stream and Bowerman looked closely at the yellow water rolling slowly by on its way down to the Bay of Gonave. There it was, a thick, black substance which oozed from somewhere beneath the bank upon which they stood and floated off down-stream on the surface of the muddy water.

Bowerman choked back his feelings, and thinking rapidly, decided on a course of action.

"Come away," he said, and he took Doyle by the arm and led him back to their former position. "That's yellow-fever sure."

"Well, I don't go near it any more," said Doyle. "When I first come here I built my shack up on the hill, so as to get away from the mosquitoes. There ain't been any mosquitoes lately, but I sleep up there anyway on account of the smell from the creek."

"But you'll have to get away," said Bowerman hurriedly. "You could get it hanging around here in the daytime as well as you could at night. Listen, Doyle, old man, I'm sorry about this. I guess I sold you a flivver, all right."

"Oh, I don't blame you," said Doyle slowly. "I guess you didn't do it on purpose. It's just the way luck goes, that's all. I'm goin' to stick it out for a while longer, anyway an'——"

"No, no, you got to get away. Listen, I'm going to take this thing off your hands. I don't want anybody to feel that I stuck him."

"But I don't feel that way," protested Doyle.

"Maybe not, but I wouldn't feel right about it myself. I'm gonna give you back just what you paid me for the land. The land will come in handy to me some time for something else. Come down to town with me and I'll give you six hundred dollars—what do you say?"

"I couldn't do it," said Doyle. "Even if I wanted to I couldn't. I gave Captain McGuire an option on the land."

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"An option?" Bowerman feigned surprize. "What does he want with the land?"

"I don't know."

"What's he going to give you?"

"Six hundred."

"Look here, Ernie, what do you owe around here? You've got some debts, haven't you?"

"I owe Shang Toy about two hundred dollars for supplies."

"Well, I'll give you two hundred extra, because it was my fault that you lost all your money."

"Gee, that's mighty fine of you, Bowerman, but I can't do it. I gave Captain McGuire an option."

"Is Captain Mac going to pay your bills? You bet he ain't. I'll even pay your passage north."

"Thanks. Gee, you're a good scout, but I can't do it, I tell you. I ain't goin' to break my word to the captain."

"Aw, to —— with Captain Mac. Look, here, I'll give you an even thousand for this piece of land."

"I gave Captain McGuire an——"

"So you said about forty times," yelled Bowerman. He was becoming desperate and excited.

"I'll give you twelve hundred!" he shouted.

"Nothing doing." Doyle looked at the other curiously.

"Fifteen hundred!"

"No."

Two thousand!" Bowerman was fast losing control of himself.

"No," quietly.

"Twenty-five hun——"

"What's th' big idea?" cut in Doyle sharply.

"What d'you mean? I just want to——"

Bowerman knew Doyle's most vulnerable point, and he began to play for it.

"Your folks in the States are pretty hard up, ain't they?" he asked. "What does your father do for a living?"

"He's a workin' man," said Doyle.

"They could use three thousand dollars, couldn't they?"

"Could they? Gee!"

"Well, here you are refusing to take it. And all for a bullying old sea-captain who's got more money than your whole family ever saw. He's got a big interest in his ship, and all kinds of property in the States. Him and old Shang has their fingers in everything. You know your father would like to have three thousand bucks."

"He don't want it so bad that he'd be willin' to see me a crook," said Doyle. "If he thought I didn't get it square he'd throw me out, three thousand an' all. An' he brought me up to feel the same way about it he does."

"This ain't crooked. This is business."

"Not my kind o' business, it ain't. I promised to sell this land to Captain McGuire for six hundred, and I'm gonna do it."

"Let me see your agreement," said Bowerman.

"Ain't got none," said Doyle. "We give our words."

"You mean it's not in writing?"

"Just that."

"That kind of an agreement ain't binding."

"It is to me."

"My ——!" Bowerman stared at him in astonishment. "D'you mean to say— Holy smoke! You're just a plain —— fool!"

"Well, what's it to you, you big bum!"

Ernie Doyle, the spirit that had carried him "over the top" flaming from his eyes, started forward, limping.

"My word's as good as any sailor's that ever lived," he said. "I guess a soldier's as good as anybody— Say, you, get th' —— offa my land!"

The boy was tired, and far from well, and he was weakened and disheartened by his recent worry and discouragement, and Bowerman, bigger, stronger, and an experienced amateur boxer, could have handled him with ease. But he didn't try; he climbed on his horse and "got."

"I wouldn't have it as a gift now," he called back. "I wouldn't give you a dollar for it."

THAT night Shang Toy stood in the door of his shop in the Champs de Mars, waiting. His Filipino clerk had gone to his room above the store, leaving Shang Toy alone.

Soon there came the sound of horses approaching along the cobble-stoned street at a sharp trot. The sound came nearer, and soon the horses rounded into the Plaza and were drawn up before Shang Toy's door.

The first man to alight was Wrayburn, the geologist, who had that day visited

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Ernie Doyle's claim. He was an elderly man, square-jawed and of the agressive type. He nodded shortly to the old Chinaman, and, his manner that of a man who has no time to waste, strode into the shop.

After the scientist came Ernie Doyle, his face more drawn and his limp a bit more pronounced. His expression was one of despair, but there was still that dogged "never say die" set to his jaw. He was a man fighting and hoping to the last ditch.

"It is as you thought," said Wrayburn abruptly to Shang Toy. "It is the best prospect I have——"

Shang Toy stopped him with a gesture.

"Just a moment, my friend," he said.

He turned to Doyle, drew up a chair, and bowed the young man into it.

"You are the guest of honor," he said in his mellow, full voice.

"Well, let's get this business over with," said Wrayburn. "Until now I've kept quiet because you asked me to, but there's no reason why we can't go right ahead with it now."

Shang Toy puckered the corners of his eyes and mouth in his queer smile.

"You are a young man," he said to the gray-haired geologist. "It is I, old Shang Toy, who should be in a hurry. I am facing the tomb, and there is so much to do—so much to think about——"

He smiled again, and placed his long, slender, yellow hand, with its polished nails, gently on Wrayburn's shoulder.

"I am in receipt of a letter," he said to the patient, mystified Doyle, "from Captain McGuire. He left it with me when he sailed for New York, but I forgot about it until today."

He bowed, and asked forgiveness with his eyes.

Wrayburn grunted scoffingly.

"That's all right, Shang," said Doyle. "What's it about?"

"Captain Mac decided before he left that he didn't want your land after all, and it is here in writing. Also, here is his check for fifty dollars. You are now free to sell your land to whom you wish."

Ernie Doyle sank back in his chair as if mortally wounded. He had been thinking of Captain Mac's offer as an anchor to windward; it would have sufficed to pay his debts and get him back to New York with something to spare. His claim, as a goldmine, was worthless, and he knew it—the geologist had confirmed his own recently arrived at opinion—and he felt that he was done. His jaw dropped and the last vestige of hope faded from his tired eyes.

"Sell it?" he moaned. "Sell it? It's too late—it's too late!"

He buried his head in his hands.

"The ball has dropped," murmured Shang Toy.

"Do not be discouraged," he said gently to Doyle. "Your luck has turned. My friend, Mr. Wrayburn, a learned and an honest man, is impatient to talk to you."

Shang Toy smiled in his peculiar way and walked to the front of his store.

ERNIE DOYLE, his mind awhirl with news so wonderful as to be almost unbelievable, had clattered off down the street on his horse. Only Wrayburn and old Shang Toy were in the store.

"And what do you two lunatics get out of this?" asked Wrayburn.

Shang Toy smoothed an imaginary wrinkle in his immaculate pongee coat.

"The knowledge that we have done good," he said, "is sufficient re——"

"Rot!" cut in Wrayburn. "What do you get?"

"Well," said Shang Toy blandly, "I own the land to the north of Doyle's tract, and Captain Mac owns the land to the south of it, and—well, between us we own about all the land around it."

"I knew it!" exclaimed the geologist. "I knew it!"

"It is possible that the oil may not be confined to Doyle's little tract."

"You bet it's possible! That whole blame valley must be full of it, and it only needed Doyle's blasting to start a seepage. I have authority to speak for my company, you know. Is your land for sale?"

"Everything I have is for sale," said Shang Toy, and he waved his hand toward his shelves and cases. "Everything. I only await a reasonable offer."

Wrayburn grinned.

"Of course," he said. "Of course. When did you and One-Two Mac buy this land?"

"The afternoon before the captain sailed."

"How did you know about it?"

"The boy told us."

"But he didn't know it until just now."

"No."

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Wrayburn gave it up.

"I would have told him before," said Shang Toy, "but I wasn't sure."

"Well, I'll be around tomorrow with that 'reasonable offer.'"

The old Chinaman walked with Wrayburn to the door.

"Say," said the latter suddenly, "what did you mean by that remark you made about the ball dropping?"

"The ball," said Shang Toy, "is the ball of Luck. It moved about on the revolving Wheel of Life—as in roulette. It has dropped into the pockets marked McGuire, Shang Toy, and Doyle."

"I understand your philosophy," said Wrayburn after a moment's thought, "but this wasn't luck—not *just* luck."

"Well—" Shang Toy smiled faintly. "Sometimes the Wheel must be manipulated—lightly—so."

He made a slight motion with his forefinger as if slowing up a rapidly revolving wheel.

OVER the top and down the side of the mountain rolled the never-ceasing avalanche of wind. It whined its endless sing-song through the tree-tops and poured with its dreary chant down into the valley. The sun was high in the east, but it had not yet topped the crest of the mountain.

Ernie Doyle was in his little shack, hard at work on a letter. His brows were drawn heavily and his lips puckered. As he wrote he murmured the words aloud:

"I am afraid to tell you how much Mr. Wrayburn said his company would pay me for it—you might have heart trouble—but it's enough to buy all the chickens an' ducks in th' world, I guess. He's coming up later today with a contract. I told you our luck had gotta turn. Give my love to Mom and tell her I'm liable to come hoppin' in any time with a bag o' money on my shoulder. Tell her I'm goin' to buy her all the darn——"

His voice grew husky here, and he finished his letter hurriedly and signed it. And then:

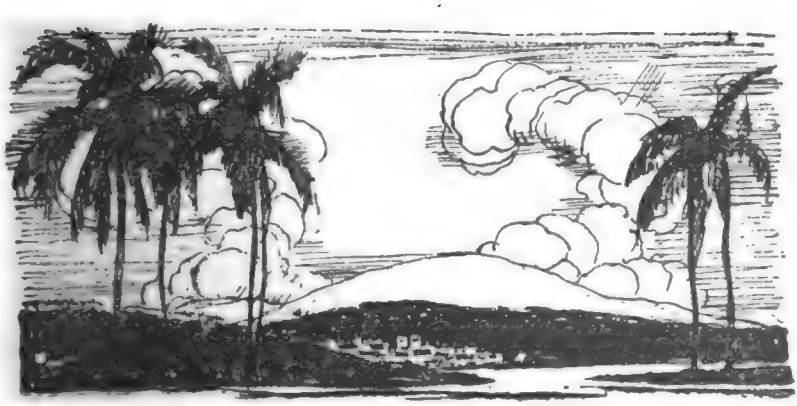
"Oh, yes, I almost forgot. Postcrip'—There was a feller here named Capt'n McGuire—he's capt'n of a ship. He had an option on my land for six hundred dollars, but he gave it up. Guess he didn't know about th' oil. I'm glad—ain't you, Pop?"

Ernie Doyle picked up a slip of paper from the table. It was a check for fifty dollars, signed "Captain John McGuire," and made out to "Ernest Doyle." He tore the check into little pieces and threw them to the wind that swept in through the open door.

"Guess I won't miss that," he said with a happy laugh.

He went to the door and faced square into the trade wind.

"Old wind's growling 'way same as ever," he murmured, "but somehow she don't seem so mournful as she did."



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FIVE HUNDRED FRANCS

A Complete Novelette

By Leonard H. Nason

Author of "The Luger," "Pilgrim's Progress," etc.

THE thin, high notes of a bugle wailed through the dim woods. In the half light of chilly dawn strange shapes stirred, changed form and assumed the outlines of men. A thing that looked like a long, flat rock disintegrated as four men crawled from under a tarpaulin.

A small hillock was revealed as a pile of rations, in the lee of which a number of shelter halves had been stretched. Bushes became animated as soldiers who had slept under them arose, stretched themselves and stood up. The woods crawled with them. Under bushes, beneath trees, under shelter halves stretched between two saplings, a regiment of field artillery had passed the night, cheek by jowl, foot by head, just as they had lain down, too weary to do more than pull a tarpaulin over their heads or stretch a shelter half between two trees to keep off the rain.

At the edge of the woods was a ration-cart, a wagon very similar to the old-fashioned dump-cart. Its shafts, held up by a small pole, were hung with the harness of the steed that drew it.

The cart was just wide enough to shelter four men, who slept between its wheels, for all the world like sardines in a can. It was good sleeping. They had a roof over them ready made, without any effort on their part.

They spread their slickers beneath them, put one blanket over the slickers, and then had seven blankets to put over themselves. This, added to their own warmth, kept them comfortable on the coldest night. The sleepers were perhaps a little cramped, but then one must put up with inconveniences in war time.

One of the men beneath the cart sat up cautiously and then began to withdraw himself slowly from among the other three, inching backward on his hands without moving his feet, much as a snake would do when sloughing its skin if it were possessed of hands. Just as he was almost out and had turned on his side preparatory to getting to his feet, his hobnailed shoe collided with the nose of one of the men who still slept. This last sat up abruptly, very full of words.

"You —— —— hammerhead," said he in brief, "why the —— don't you be a little more careful when you crawl around in the middle of the night?"

" 'Tain't the middle of the night," said the other man. "First call just blew. It's time yuh got up anyways. I didn't mean to kick yuh, only that big beak o' yours got in the way."

The other two men groaned. One turned over and buried his head in the blankets, and the other sat up and reached up on the axle for his shoes.

"Won't you two birds ever shut up," said he, "or have we got to suffer through another party the way we did the last one? By ——, I'm going to get one or the other of you put on a gun, so I am. I can't stand this and a battle too."

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There was a sudden hush. The man who was still lying down threw off the blankets and looked at the last speaker in astonishment.

"We goin' to have another party, sergeant?" he asked apprehensively.

The sergeant, conscious that he had made a slip of the tongue, continued to put on his shoes without reply.

"Hot dog," said he. "There's a heavy dew around here. My shoes seem wet as —— this morning. I'm not going to take 'em off tonight."

He finished lacing his shoes, then jumped to his feet and departed with his puttees still in his hand. The remaining three were highly excited.

"Did yuh hear him say there was another party on?" asked one.

"I don't believe it," replied another, "'cause the old man said we was goin' to rest billets; and anyway we just come out of Saint Mihiel, and they wouldn't chuck us into another drive without a relief."

The third man made no comment, but sadly knocked his helmet against a tree to free it of the mud that plastered it. His name was Artie Beal, and he came from Vermont, that small State that is all up and down, and which if flattened out would cover more acreage than Texas. The three began to stumble through the undergrowth to an open spot where their battery was falling in.

"It does seem," said Artie, "as though this war was one dum thing after another. If I'd knowed what a mess it was goin' to turn out I'd stayed to home."

"What you growlin' about now, Artie?"

"If you was to stay here till I got through tellin' you what makes me growl we wouldn't git to retreat, let alone reveille."

"Come on, come on!" yelled the first sergeant. "Get in line; let's get this over with!"

The men poured in from all sides; there was a hurried calling of the roll by the section chiefs, a stiffening of the ranks when assembly blew, and then the soldiers melted into the woods, whence they presently appeared with their mess-kits, and made all possible speed to the rolling kitchen, in order to be as near the head of the line as possible.

Those at the head of the line ate first, and if they gulped down their bacon whole and burned their mouths pouring their coffee down them without waiting for it to cool, they might have time to get in line again and get a second helping. Bacon and sirup and bread, washed down with coffee as black as night, just enough of each to make one want more when it had been eaten.

Artie Beal was chasing the last remnants of sirup around the lid of his mess-kit with a piece of bread when he felt a toe gently prodding him. He looked up. The sergeant who slept with him under the wagon was standing there.

"When you get through your breakfast come over to the picket-line. I got somethin' for your ear."

"I'm through now."

"Come on then."

The two went to where the horses were tied to a long rope. There was a pile of feed-bags and a few bales of hay there, and the sergeant sat on one of these.

"Artie," he began, "keep this under your hat. Tomorrow a party comes off that's going to either end this war or put us all under ground. It'll be the biggest thing yet."

Artie groaned.

"I got to go with the infantry," the sergeant continued, "and when they get located at the end of the first night I come back and tell the major and the old man their exact location, so when they get ready to hop off again in the morning we'll know just where to put the barrage. You come with me and learn how this liaison thing is done. Then the next day another man will go up, and each one of you new guys will get his turn. Compree?"

"I compree," said Artie with all the eager joy of one who hears a death sentence imposed upon him. "I compree all right. I never had more dinged luck in my life."

"You wanted to get yourself put in the liaison detail," said the sergeant. "Now you're in it you don't want to work. What do you think we do all the time, stay in a dugout? How do you suppose all the liaison men get bumped off so there's vacancies for hammerheads like you? If you wanted to stay on a gun, why the —— didn't you say so? You volunteered for this job, didn't you?"

"Yep, I know," said Artie sadly, "but that was before——"

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"Before what? Before what? You haven't got anything the matter with you, have you?"

The sergeant peered at Artie suspiciously.

"No," said Artie, "I ain't."

"Well, then, what the ——'s the matter with you? By ——, answer up now, and if you got any good reason why you can't go up we'll tell the old man, and he'll let you off; but if you ain't, up you go if I have to kick you all the way. I think you got a yellow stripe myself."

"I ain't yellow!" said Artie fiercely.

"Why don't you want to go up then?"

"Well," said Artie, heaving a great sigh, "if you'll promise not to tell any one I'll tell you."

"Shoot!"

"Do you remember," began Artie, "the second morning of that Saint Mihiel thing after we'd moved up to Nonsard? Well, the old man sent me back to see where was all the rollin' transport an' why the kitchen hadn't come up. You remember where the road forked, and one road went off to Montsec, and the other went east somewhere, that down the east road a piece was a path that went off through some mowin'. I was goin' along that path, and I near stepped on a pile o' meat that used to be a squad o' doughboys. Now I took outta there, you better believe."

He paused.

"Well, go on. What's all this comin' to—anyway?" demanded the sergeant.

"Just a minute now, and you'll see. I beat it off through the bushes—there was a kind of swamp there—and dummed if I didn't fall over suthin' the first jump. It was a dead officer, I seen as soon as I got up, and I started to cover ground some more. Then I stopped.

" 'Arthur,' says I, 'he's dead; he ain't a-goin' to hurt you none,' says I. 'Maybe you better go back and look him over, Arthur; maybe his folks'll be worryin' about him,' says I.

"So I went back and turned him over and hunted round fer suthin' to identify him by; but his tag was gone and his wrist watch was gone and he didn't have ary thing in his pockets."

"I don't see what this has got to do with your not wantin' to go up tonight," interrupted the sergeant.

"I'm just comin' to that. This officer had one o' them leather clip pockets for his automatic, an' I thought I might as well take it along with me. Not that I carried a automatic, but I owe that durn hog-choker of a Dennison some money, an' he's got a automatic, an' I was goin' to give him the clip pocket if he'd call it square on what I owed."

"Well, did you give it to him?"

"No, I didn't."

"Oh, ——," moaned the sergeant, "give me strength! You —— —— hay-shaker, if you don't spit out some sense pretty quick I'll knock you clean outta the zone of operations. Answer me now! Why don't you want to go up with the doughboys with me?"

"Because," Artie almost screamed, "they was five hundred francs in that clip pocket, and I'm scared I'll get killed before I can spend 'em."

ARTIE had but recently been detailed to the liaison squad, and although he had been through the Saint Mihiel affair with it, he had done no work. The liaison men have a peculiar job. They are really nothing but messenger boys.

"Liaison" means literally "connection," but freely it means communication. The various units in any army must know where they themselves are, where the unit on the right and left is and what it is doing. They must have communication to the rear. The larger the unit and the greater the distance, the more involved liaison becomes.

There are many different ways of keeping up liaison. Air-planes, balloons, rockets of different colors, motor-cycle messengers and lastly just dismounted men. The last is the best.

Low visibility, fog and smoke affect the first three, pigeons and dogs can not think, have not the sense to take shelter if in danger and are easily traced and killed. A dog has to follow a known path, and once a dog route is spotted its usefulness is at an end. Wireless can be interfered with or the station wrecked by shell-fire; telephone wires are hard to lay and harder to keep open after they are in place. Motor-cycle men and horsemen make good targets and can not go over rough ground. So then we have left the dismounted runner, a man familiar with all the various methods of liaison but knowing that at the last the best of them is his two feet. Liaison is an indefinite thing at best, and inspecting officers, when they

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can not find anything else to criticize, know that they can say in their reports that "the liaison might be improved" without fear of contradiction.

After supper Artie and the sergeant left the woods and reported to the artillery liaison officer with a regiment of infantry and were assigned to a battalion. They hiked with the infantry that night, slept with them in the woods and were roused out before daylight, to sit around for hours and wonder what was going to happen.

Artie took out his roll of francs, counted them, admired the engraving and put them securely away in the pocket of his shirt, which he buttoned and then secured it with a safety pin from a bandoleer to make it doubly safe.

At last the command was given to fall in. Packs were adjusted, rifles slung, and the column began to move through the trees. As the regiment advanced, Artie noticed that there were long rows of rotting stables, silent and empty, and many small buildings, like an abandoned summer camp. Moreover, there seemed to be a number of mysterious formations of the ground, covered with new grass, very lush and green.

"What did this place used to be?" Artie asked the sergeant.

"I don't know. Maybe it's an old rest billet. We're back of Verdun now, where they had the big shove in nineteen sixteen. Probably this was a horse echelon or something like that.

"Most of these big woods are full of old barracks. The frogs had a gang of men here in those days."

"Do you suppose those piles of dirt are graves?"

The sergeant shook his head.

"Old garbage pits probably; that's what makes the grass so green over them. They filled 'em in, you know, and piled the dirt up good and high so that when it settled there wouldn't be a hole there."

Before they had been marching very long, the column began to pass piles of packs, row upon row of them, guarded by a few solitary sentinels. The infantrymen began to lick dry lips and show sings of slight nervousness. The younger officers looked inquiringly at their superiors, for the piles of packs indicated that they were getting close to where the army had jumped off to begin the drive a few hours before.

There was no sound of firing, nor any other indication that they were nearing the scene of battle. The artillery sergeant began to look about him for good cover in case the column came suddenly under hostile fire, and was even considering suggesting to the major that he have his men form combat groups at least, when the woods ended and the column came out into the open country.

It was plain that they were still a long way from the front lines. A white road that stretched before them was smooth and even and bore no trace of shell-holes. Moreover there were some French signs with names of mysterious towns on them, and a few in English, crudely written, as if they had been put up in haste.

Artie remembered suddenly that they had not yet passed a Gas Alert sign. These signs were posted along the side of every road, by-paths, in fact everywhere that any number of troops frequently passed. When a soldier saw one of these signs it meant that he must change his gas mask from the carrying position, hung over his shoulder, to the alert position, strapped on his chest, for he was now in an area where gas might be expected at any minute. The presence of Gas Alert signs meant that the front line was not more than a mile or so away. Here there were no such signs; the road had not been shelled; therefore the regiment was still some distance from the front.

Artie imparted this information to those nearest him and felt considerably cheered. He patted the pocket where his roll of money made a slight bulge.

"You an' me will go to Paris yet," he thought.

THEY began to climb a long hill, past a town that a sign nailed to a wall said was Sivrey-la-Perche. The red-tile roofs were speckled with shell-holes, and blackened beams protruded like stumps of old teeth.

"We're a long ways back yet," remarked the sergeant. "That town has been under shell-fire for four years, and if we was anywhere near the front there wouldn't be enough left of it to put in your eye. Now I wonder where the rest of this great army is. I haven't seen a soul since we left the woods."

The head of the column came out on the top of the hill and turned north on a road that bore a warning—

String No Overhead Wires.

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To the inquiry of one of the infantrymen Artie made reply, glad to show that there was one thing he knew about.

"This is a road the balloon trucks use," he explained. "Them sassige balloons are harnessed to a big truck with a steel cable. The truck runs along the road and tows the balloon. The guy in the balloon sees more, and it's harder for Fritz to take a crack at him with anti-balloon guns. If the' was any wires strung across the road the cable would pull 'em down; d'yuh see?"

"Well, would just a sign keep them from runnin' wires across the road?"

"No; but the telephone guys knows that if the wires gets tore down, it only means a trip up here to fix 'em up again, maybe when it's their sleepin'-time, so no one with a bullhead's brains is goin' to make themselves a lot of work."

The men had moved out on to the back of a ridge, and had they been tourists there would have been exclamations of delight and much rapture. On both sides there was a wide view. The day was bright and cloudless, and the visibility almost perfect.

To the east was a wide valley, and to the west another. Northward another ridge cut off the vision, but it was small loss.

On either hand, as far as the eye could see, the country was alive, the fields crawling with men in khaki. In places there was no distinguishing individuals, and it seemed as if the landscape were moving bodily, or a flood were covering the valley.

Steadily, irresistibly, the American Army was on the move. The roads that looped over the distant hills looked like great snakes, so filled were they with traffic.

One that ran parallel to the ridge the infantry were on was occupied by artillery, and the effect of the figures of men and horses, made tiny by the distance, was very ludicrous. In the middle distance was a column of machine-gunners with the tiny wagons, like a child's cart, on which they carried their guns and ammunition. The impression was one of tremendous power, an overwhelming tide that would engulf the enemy, and, surging on, overrun all Germany.

"This'll be another Saint Mihiel!" exclaimed Artie. "I betcha the war'll be over in a week."

"Don't bet an awful lot on it," said the sergeant. "There's not more than a couple of divisions in sight from here, and you bet your life Jerry has got six or seven anyway, waitin' to give us the glad hand, and they'll be behind cement walls and barbed wire, and they'll throw everything from potato-masher grenades to fourteen-inch shells at us. No, sir; I don't get all enthused over seein' any gang of soldiers hikin' across-country on the morning of a drive.

"Yuh see, Artie, the bombardment before a shove usually begins about one in the morning, and the first troops jump off around five. That means that for four hours every —— gun position and trench and cow-path has been shelled and hammered and flattened out, and every one that was in 'em killed off for maybe a couple of miles back, or even farther. Whichever side starts things don't make any difference at all; the first rush is bound to go quite a ways.

"Now then, when the infantry gets through the area where the shellin' was and gets back to where it wasn't so heavy and where the defense has begun to stiffen and where the reserve positions was, then, yuh see, the real fightin' begins.

"Maybe Fritz beats it again; maybe he don't; maybe he pulls back a mile or so and puts up a —— of a resistance and we can't break through. Then the drive bogs down right there, and if he pulls off a counter attack you an' me and all these other birds you can see scattered around here for six miles or so gets gathered in or bumped off, and the game starts over again.

"It's one thing to flatten out a salient that the enemy don't want anyway, like Saint Mihiel, and it's another to try to break down his front door. If things don't slow up 'long about noon, chances are we're makin' out all right; but it ain't noon yet, not by two hours."

Two hours is not such a long time after all. At eleven the stomach usually begins cautious inquiries as to the next instalment of food, and the time passes pleasantly between eleven and twelve in argument between the stomach and its owner.

The infantry, then, trudged hopefully on its way, looking at the scenery, speculating as to what divisions the troops they encountered belonged to and mildly wondering when they would eat. They would have been greatly startled to know that a goodly number of them had eaten their last earthly meal.

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THE ridge came to an abrupt end, and the road swung off to one side and down into the valley. The end of the road had been masked by a grove of trees, so that what lay beyond had been hidden from the marching troops until they reached the spot where the descent began.

Northward was nothing but a waste of tumbling hills as far as the eye could reach. Eastward a blue line—the heights on the east bank of the Meuse; and to the west a haze of green, the forest that gave to all this region its name—the Argonne. Just beyond the end of the road, almost near enough to reach out and touch, was an observation balloon.

"I'll say there's a balloon!" cried one of the infantrymen. "There's about a dozen of 'em."

The balloons were long and humpbacked with an absurd swelling at the lower end that seemed to make that end hang lower than the other. A fringe of ropes dangled from each. When the cable to which the balloon was moored was rolled up and the balloon hauled down to the ground the men of the balloon company would dash out and seize these ropes and so hold the balloon captive against any wandering gusts of air and could haul the ungainly thing into its bed without danger of its becoming entangled with near-by objects. The men on the balloons, connected with the ground by telephones, were watching the progress of the distant battle and telling the artillery where to shoot.

"——!" exclaimed Artie. "Lookit the Huns!"

Exclamations ran along the column, a mutter of excitement. Coming up the road escorted by a mounted M. P., was a long, gray column—prisoners. They marched calmly along, four abreast, looking neither to the right nor left, stolid and taciturn.

The leader of the column was an officer, evidently of high rank judging by his glittering boots and the gleam of gold on his high collar and wide shoulder-straps. He had a monocle screwed into his eye, at which the doughboys jeered derisively and were promptly taken to task by their officers. Wasp-waisted, erect, his gray uniform fitting him like a glove, the officer stalked on, more as if he were leading a Potsdam review than a march to the prison pens.

After him came several ranks of noncommissioned officers, distinguished by their superior bearing and the white facings on their collars.

Then the rank and file, the cannon-food, dirty, bearded, stinking with a smell that is past all belief, shambling, scuffling by, some wearing their coal-scuttle helmets, others the round cap, many bareheaded. They were of all ages, from smooth-faced boys to gray-bearded men. The uniforms were ill-fitting and worn.

Some of them plodded along stolidly, as if one place was as good as another, which it probably was as far as they were concerned. The younger ones grinned bashfully at the Yanks. One or two of the older ones let the hate that was in them show in their eyes, and when one crossed looks with an infantryman the Yank felt his spine creep.

"——!" a doughboy muttered. "I'm glad I ain't meetin' that bird in a bayonet fight!"

"Did you see that look, too?" asked the artillery sergeant. "I thought he was looking at me."

"I could just massage that ugly mug of his with a gun-butt now, and he'd never give me no eye like that again. Ain't they a dirty bunch! Lookit the difference between us guys an' them."

The infantryman expectorated brownly.

"Huh!" replied the artilleryman. "Tomorrow morning you won't know yourself. Your own mother would disown you. Those birds been in the trenches for weeks probably. You'll be just as dirty tomorrow and twice as ragged, 'cause this —— burlap they give us for clothes falls apart the minute it gets in sight of any barbed wire, let alone bein' torn on some.

"When my outfit come off the Marne they was goin' to put the whole works in the mill for indecent exposure. The only thing we had that wasn't all in shreds was our tin hats."

"We won't smell like that, will we?" asked the infantryman.

"Well, not quite so bad. Jerry hasn't got no soap, you know; but you won't be no bed of roses, I'll tell the world. Sometimes a guy smells so bad he keeps himself awake. Why I mind a time——"

Loud cries of excitement: "Look! Look!" "What the ——'s that?" a sudden bending of necks and a great gazing upward. The balloon swayed above them now, almost overhead. A huge, white thing like a tremendous mushroom appeared just below

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the bag, springing apparently from thin air. Another appeared beside it with a most uncanny effect. The column halted in consternation.

"There's a boche after the balloon!" cried Artie. "Them's the fellers just jumped out in their parachutes!"

There was a volley of commands and a little cursing, so that the column moved forward again; but every neck was bent, every eye in the air. Men stumbled against the men in front of them, and three or four would fall in a heap, then scramble hurriedly to their feet again lest they miss some of the show.

"Where's the boche? I can't see no boche!" they complained.

"Watch the balloon," said Artie. "Watch the balloon; you'll see him in a minute."

"There he is!" cried every one suddenly.

Far above the balloon, looking about the size of a mosquito, was a single plane. As they watched it dropped swiftly, and thin threads of smoke could be seen darting from the front of it. The plane passed over the balloon and turned toward the next balloon to the east, from which the observers leaped without delay, and the white globes of their parachutes gleamed in the sun. The first balloon still swayed calmly.

"He missed it, didn't he?" exclaimed the infantrymen.

"The —— he did," answered the artillery sergeant. "It'll be down around our ears in a minute."

A tiny spurt of black smoke appeared above the bag, grew larger, and then the whole fabric burst into flame and came plunging earthward in smoking ruin. Its companion to the east followed it, leaving a high, thin column of black, oily smoke behind it. The tiny boche disappeared in the sky toward the German lines, to the accompaniment of faint pounding of machine guns.

"Two down!" muttered the sergeant grimly. "Probably Jerry wants to shift his men around a bit, which he can't do if we got a lot of balloons up to watch the roads. There'll be —— to pay yet," he added gloomily.

ANOTHER column of prisoners appeared, longer than the first. Artie felt of the bulge over his heart where his roll of francs was.

"Gee," he thought, "suppose I got taken prisoner!"

He watched the prisoners file by, their unbuttoned overcoats flapping at their heels.

"Money wouldn't do them fellers any good, would it?" he asked the sergeant.

"Might," was the reply. "I never knew any place yet money wasn't a help. They could buy drinks and chow with it, couldn't they?"

"That's right, too," agreed Artie, but he was little comforted. "If I'd had as many brains as a snake has hips I'd enlisted in the quartermaster corps," said he.

"Aw, cheer up," said the sergeant. "You'll have plenty of chance to spend that money. You'll come through all right; you'll be back in rest billets gettin' put in the kitchen for gettin' drunk this time next week."

One of the infantrymen interrupted to know if they were near the front line yet.

"You won't need to ask," said the sergeant. "When we get about a mile from it you'll think you're there, but you won't be. When you begin to think you're dead and gone to ——, that's the time we'll be almost there. When we do get there you won't have time to think about nothin'.

"This morning I got kinda jumpy when we went by all those packs, because they don't usually ditch packs until just before the jumpin'-off place, but maybe that outfit had a bunch of John officers that didn't know no better. No sense in leavin' blankets 'way back there. The men that owned those blankets are goin' to be cold tonight, what few of 'em will be able to feel cold."

The sergeant looked around at the horror-stricken faces about him and laughed harshly.

"Boy," he chuckled, "I ain't kiddin' yuh! This is a real he-war."

He recounted some of the things he had seen at Château-Thierry; he told them tales of dugouts caved in on their sleeping occupants, of men disembowled by shells and their entrails flung in the faces of their comrades, of whole companies caught in close formation and annihilated in the flick of an eyelash.

It would seem that a soldier of experience and a non-commissioned officer would have realized that these infantrymen were going into their first fight, that the strain would be hard enough on them without the added torture of listening to gruesome descriptions, to which their imaginations

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added details that the sergeant's facile tongue had neglected.

Two more balloons were shot down in the early part of the afternoon, and before four o'clock the last of that cluster that had weaved and swayed like a herd of elephants had disappeared in flame and smoke, leaving nothing but two huge white umbrellas floating gently downward and a tiny gnat growing smaller and smaller in the sky to tell the watching thousands below what had happened.

One of the observers in the last balloon had delayed a moment too long, perhaps to take one last look before making the jump. The fragments of the burning envelop swept dangerously near his parachute as they went down, and one long flaming streamer just kissed its white circle. A tiny tongue of flame—a blaze—the parachute was all afire—poufl—it was gone! And a little speck rushed down to earth, passing the wreckage of the balloon in its fall. A mighty roar of horror swelled from all the army. No need for any questions now! Indeed this was war!

The going was rougher here. The infantry began to pass ruined towns whose buildings were mere shells. The roads were muddier, and deep pits began to appear that none needed to be told were shell-holes.

The sun was near the western horizon, and as the column climbed the slope of a long hill it gleamed redly at them through the ghost of a dead wood, the trees all blasted and torn, long since withered in the hail of steel that had beaten on them for four years.

Broken wagons began to appear in the ditch, and the bodies of animals. Ambulances passed; but the curtains in the back were down, and the marching troops were saved the mute appeal of hob-nailed shoes wabbling with the swaying of the car or a pair of naked feet bound with bloody bandages.

At a cross-roads the column halted, and when it went forward again, began to disintegrate. Guides had joined it here, and each unit was being taken to its own section of the line, first by battalions, then by companies, finally by platoons; but this last was not yet.

The two artillerymen were to go with the commander of the second battalion. This officer, however, continued to march along with one of the companies. There was a loud swish, as if some one had waved an enormous fan, then a far-off clatter like a plate breaking.

"By crimus!" cried Artie. "There's the first one!"

"No need to duck," said the sergeant to those about him. "That shell was a long ways off."

There were more, but faint; some were just audible. The company halted and was ordered into the ditch.

"Probably this is where we make a battalion post of command," said the sergeant to Artie. "It's about time we got under ground anyway. They'll do a little harassing fire on this road after a while."

"How close do you think we are?" asked Artie.

"I don't know; can't tell in this country because it's been fought over so much. These shell-holes may be a couple years old. If we was anyway near you'd think they'd thrown some tinware at us before now. Maybe the pressure is so tight up there he ain't got any guns to spare to shell the back areas with.

"I wish to —— I'd thought to have a cigaret before it got so dark. If I smoke one now some boche airman is liable to lay an egg on us."

The men sat silently by the road in the gathering darkness. They shifted uneasily from time to time; there was the soft thud of a pack being punched into a more comfortable shape, the clink of a stopper striking against the canteen-side as some thirsty soldier took a drink, or the crash of a rifle falling to the ground.

For all that there was a battle raging the road was very still, save that once in a great while, when the wind blew from the north, there would be a faint rattling, like a distant trolley car crossing a switch. Some of the infantry asked the two artillerymen what the column was waiting for, but the two had no idea; in fact none save the major and the guides could know.

Down the road, perhaps five hundred yards, was the place where the drive had started that morning, where the infantry had jumped off from behind a road that ran east and west. The unburied dead lay thick on that road and on the fields, and more of them lay in the underbrush on either side. The place was strewn with abandoned rifles and parts of equipment, belts and haversacks and bandoleers of ammunition.

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Medical corps men were prowling around in the dark looking for wounded, and there was a dressing-station behind every bush, filled with quiet wounded patiently waiting their turn to go back in the ambulance. There is nothing that shatters the nerve of green soldiers like the sight of the wreckage of a battle, and this column of infantry was being held until it was too dark to see the thousand forms of horrid death that were strewn about in all that region.

"I'm goin' to brace one of these sergeant majors," said the artillery sergeant suddenly, "and see what we're waitin' for."

He crept along the ditch a ways and shortly came back cursing horribly.

"Did you ever hear anything like it in all your service?" he demanded of Artie. "That great big leatherhead plans to go right through with this company! He wants to be able to make his decisions from direct observation! The —— —— idiot! He'll get killed before he can bat an eye, an' so will we!"

"I knew it!" wailed Artie. "I knew it; I knew it; I knew it all the time!"

"Yuh never knew it!" said the sergeant fiercely. "The major never told the captain till just now!"

"Oh to —— with the major!" Artie groaned. "I knew my findin' that there five hundred francs was too good to last!"

FINALLY there was the word of command. The infantry rose, adjusted their packs and took up the weary march once more. The battle grew nearer rapidly.

Artie remembered once when he was a small boy being left alone in a house when a thunderstorm broke. There was the same deadness to the air, the swish of the draft through the house and the slam of a door, the clatter of pans falling in the kitchen. He remembered his terror then, and tried to tell himself that he was not afraid, that this was not his first battle, that he had heard all this stuff before.

It is one thing, though, to crouch behind a gun-shield with a nice dugout conveniently near and an officer out on the flank watching the bursts so that plenty of warning can be given if they get too near, and quite another to stumble along a dark road, hearing the shells clattering nearer and nearer, and wondering just how long it will be before they begin to drop among the ranks.

The road ended abruptly. There was no more trace of any path, and the men went across an open field.

"Gas Alert!" was passed down the column.

"Jerusalem, my glorious home," muttered Archie. "If I ever get out of here alive I'll go over the hill."

Then he adjusted his mask and tried to calm the wild beating of his heart.

The column changed formation. They were marching in open order now, so that there would be the fewest possible casualties from a single shell.

Artie and the sergeant, with the battalion staff, were trailing along behind the major. Suddenly two men appeared out of the night and demanded what outfit that was. The major told them.

"We've been waiting for you, major!" the strangers exclaimed, and therewith ensued a whispered conversation while the troops halted and knelt down. The artillery sergeant crept close to the whispering officers and heard that which he was not meant to hear. He crept back to Artie and imparted the glad news.

"Didn't I tell yuh?" he whispered huskily in Artie's ear. "The drive's bogged right clear to the axles! The division on the left didn't get anywhere; they didn't hardly get off. They run into a lot of hard luck tryin' to take a town, and long about sundown they hauled tail clear back to the heavies, by ——! So we stay here tonight, so our gang can have a rallyin'-point when they come surgin' back, which they're bound to do when they know their flank is wavin' in the breeze."

"I always was Hard Luck's favorite son," said Artie.

The sergeant was right. The infantry were moved forward a little way, where the slope of a hill gave some protection, and there they dug themselves little holes like graves, just deep enough to lower them below the surface of the ground, and just long enough to lie down in. These would give them some shelter in case of a bombardment.

"I'm spendin' the night here," said the sergeant, "because they don't want me to go out now, not till they see how things go. No chance to get any wire in, and I'll be the only carrier pigeon they got."

Artie crawled into his fox-hole and arranged his shelter half as a roof to keep him

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dry in case of rain. The sergeant stood irresolutely for a few moments. He had expected to spend the night with his battery, and consequently had not dug himself a hole. If things had gone well, he would have been fast asleep by now.

A muttering voice startled him. It was Artie saying his prayers—

"Now I lay me down to sleep; I pray the Lord my soul to keep.

"If I should die— Oh, Lord," said Artie brokenly, "I can't say it, but you know what I mean."

The sergeant went softly away. How long was it since he had heard any one say his prayers! He couldn't remember.

He looked around him at the scarred hillside where the infantry had dug in and to the north where now and again there would be a faint glow from a bursting shell or the twinkle of a floating Véry light.

In the midst of thousands the sergeant felt a sudden loneliness. He remembered that he didn't even have a fox-hole to crawl into.

"If I should die before I wake——"

Artie hadn't dared say it. Small wonder. The chances of his really dying before he waked were very excellent.

It came upon the sergeant that he wanted to say a prayer himself. Quite simply he knelt down and thought a little while on what he should say.

There was an Austrian gun whose shells gave no warning of their approach, for which reason the doughboys called them whiz-bangs, and this is the best possible description of them. A shell from one of these guns struck almost by the sergeant's folded hands.

After the crash of the explosion, some timorous heads appeared above ground to see what damage had been done. All they could see was the drifting smoke and the dust settling, for it was too dark to distinguish the huddled remnant that was left of the artilleryman.

TWO hours later the first sergeant and the platoon sergeants went here and there among the fox-holes, stirring the sleepers with a rough foot.

"Git up, gang; roll out! It's comin' daylight. Everybody up now!"

There was a heavy mist, and the soldiers rubbed their eyes and stamped their feet in an effort to shake the sleep from their bodies. They had been lightly shelled a good part of the night, but the fire had ceased long enough for them to get a few hours of sleep. Exhausted as they were by the day's march, sleep was impossible while the shells were bursting all about them; but when at last the shelling had stopped they had fallen instantly asleep, to be dragged forth at dawn, to "stand to" and await what might occur.

With the rising of the sun, the mist burned off and one could look up, up, into the still pink sky and see the airmen of both sides circling about like hawks, pursued by puffs of white or black smoke, depending on which army was shooting anti-aircraft guns at them. There was an unusual amount of activity in the air. There were lone scouts and photograph planes, flying low with an attendant fighting-plane, just visible in the haze above. A belated bombing-squadron hurried toward the German lines, flying in formation like a flock of wild geese.

There were no fights. Each side seemed content to let the other alone provided it could do its own work in peace. Perhaps this was not really the case, but then the men who watched were not acquainted with aircraft tactics and knew no better.

A sudden gust of cheering made Artie scramble from his hole. A water-cart with a rolling kitchen had appeared and been driven up the side of the hill.

"I ain't got nothin' but coffee," shouted the cook, "but it's hot, an' I just follered the water-cart up here."

God bless the cook! The men proceeded to open the cans of hash and tomatoes they had in their packs and took their tin cups from their canteen carriers. Cold hash, tomatoes and hardtack; but they would have hot coffee to wash it down with. A mess-line leaped into being from nothing, but this the officers dissolved.

"Don't form a line," they ordered, "and don't crowd around the kitchen. Stay off away from it, and every corporal bring his squad up in turn. Remember we're very near the enemy, and any large number of men will draw fire."

So they sat around as best they might and tried not to be impatient; but the circle about the kitchen grew smaller and smaller, and the crowd denser and denser. It takes an unbelievably long time to take a few men up to a kitchen and have each

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given a cup of coffee, black with no sugar, and those that waited their turn were very impatient.

Fritz saw them, of course. He had some balloons up now, and some of those circling planes saw them and marked them for future reference. They were not shelled, however. There are lots more ways of killing a man than with shell-fire.

After breakfast the first sergeant wandered about, announcing loudly that each platoon would furnish three men for a burying-detail.

"A burying-detail! Who's dead?"

Artie thought with a strange sickness of heart that he had not seen his sergeant that morning. So some of those shells that had crumped around last night had got somebody! Artie went over to where the first sergeant was explaining their duties to some pallid-faced men with entrenching tools in their hands.

"It won't be much of a job," said the first sergeant. "All you have to do is to shovel the dirt in on top of them. They were all killed in their fox-holes and there won't be anything to do but cover them with a blanket.

"Corporal Jenny knows which ones are to be buried, and he will take off their dog-tags. He knows where they are. Now let's make it fast, because we may have to move out of here, and we want to take care of our buddies first."

He further explained that due to lack of materials no crosses could be put up, but that each man's helmet would be placed at the head of the grave and his identification tag tied to his bayonet, which would be thrust into the ground by the helmet.

"Did you see anything of that guy was with me last night?" Artie asked the first sergeant. "That artillery sergeant?"

"I don't know," replied the other. "What did he look like?"

"Why he was kinda big, and had a frog leather belt instead of a pistol-belt."

"Was his name Kennedy"? asked the infantryman.

"Yes," said Artie, and his heart hurtled down into his boots.

"Yes," the first sergeant replied, "I seen him. He got wrecked by a shell. Yessir, I'll tell the world he got ruined by it. We buried him before daylight, so the rest of the gang couldn't see him. I wrote his name an' number down, so's I could tell the chaplain about it.

"So he was an artilleryman, was he? I couldn't make out what he was doin' here. I knew he didn't belong to this outfit."

Artie felt numb. The sergeant had been killed. Artie had never thought of the sergeant being killed; it didn't seem possible. Last night he had been alive, and now he was gone utterly, and had to be hurriedly buried so that the sight of him might not affect his comrades of the day before.

The first shell had probably got him. Artie remembered, now, he had known that shell had struck very near, for his ears had rung for an hour afterward.

Artie thirsted for some one to converse with. The greatest troubles grow small when there is some one to confide in. He looked about and discovered three men who were trying to shave. He hastened over to them."

"How's tricks, fellers?" he hailed. "Tryin' to mow off a few?"

"Tryin' to," said one of them shortly; "only we ain't got no soap."

"I'll loan you a wipe off mine," said Artie. "I've got a big stick."

He went back to his pack and produced his shaving-tools.

"All set," declared Artie. "How's for water?"

"We was tryin' to dope out," said the spokesman, "how we was goin' to shave. The sergeant give orders for every one to shave, account the gas-mask wouldn't fit tight over a beard. Here we got our nice new razors and our trench mirrors that we got give us by fond friends; but I don't see no water, and until you come we didn't have no soap, account the jug-head that had charge of the common stick forgettin' to put it in his pack in violation of the sixty-fifth article o'war."

"Well," declared Artie, "us regulars hez overcome worse problems than that. Now for shavin', as regards the gas-mask not fittin', that won't bother you none after a while. As regards water, we gets out a tin cup, and every one that hungers to shave, contributes a little water from his canteen. Four-five men, d'yuh see, can get together enough water to shave in without any o' them givin' away a great deal."

The three did as Artie directed. Each poured a little water into a cup, and worked

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up a lather with that and the stick of soap that the artilleryman loaned them. The water became rather soapy in time, but one can't expect everything. Shaving at the front is a ticklish job at best, for it requires the removal of both tin hat and gas-mask, a thing that does not add to the shaver's peace of mind.

"It's very good of you to loan us your soap," said one of the doughboys. "I'm sure we should have been lost without it."

Artie looked quickly at this man, who talked as if he were an officer. However, his sleeve bore no braid; nothing but the crossed rifles that showed he was a first-class private.

"Oh, that's all right," said Artie. "I've got enough to last me for a while, and when I get out of here and git my next leave, I can buy a barrel of it."

"Don't you think you ought to say *if* you get out of here, and not *when?*" said the other smilingly.

Artie scraped on in silence for a minute or two, then he wiped the soap from his face with a towel and spat viciously. As he put on his blouse his hand brushed the pocket where his treasure was.

"You're a —— of a man," he said between his teeth," to go an' spoil my whole day after I lent you my soap an' everything."

He started to walk away, very full of wrath.

"Hey!" called one of the men after him. "You forgot your soap!" Artie gave them the soldier's reply and stalked on without turning.

He collided with the sergeant major. "Hey, artillery," said this one, "where the ——'s that liaison sergeant?"

"He's dead," said Artie.

"Is he though?" cried the other. "Well, can you compree that! So he's dead, is he?"

"I didn't ask him; they buried him too quick," remarked Artie acidly.

"Ain't you the little sunbeam! I bet they don't need lanterns in your outfit, you're so bright! Well, you just come down to the major and get your wick trimmed. He's going to put you to work."

THE major had established himself down the hill in a pit that some sweating privates had dug and roofed with old elephant iron; that is, great curved sheets of corrugated iron that the enemy used to make huts with and to shore up the roofs of his dugouts. The pieces that covered the new post of command would keep out the rain, and the major could have a light after dark without being seen; but mosquito netting would be just as good protection against machine-gun fire, and a shell would not even explode on hitting it, but continue on through undisturbed.

The major sat within, on an overturned bucket. Some enterprising signal-corps men had already run in a wire, and there was a telephone instrument leaning against the side of the pit. The sergeant major sat outside like a watchdog, and the adjutant, a doctor and another officer kept the major company within. They smoked pipes and admired their boots, and thought what a fine time they were having in the war. The major was a small, fat, thin-haired man, a little nervous and inclined to be brusk in an endeavor to hide it.

"Are you the liaison man from the artillery?" he demanded of Artie.

"Yes, sir."

"Where is that sergeant that was with you yesterday? Why isn't he where I can get hold of him? He must think he's here on a picnic. He's at the front now, and he must realize it. I can't have him running around loose like this. He should be here at the post of command all the time. Go find him now and then report back here.

"You men are supposed to stay with me. How am I going to communicate with the artillery if the liaison men are hiding out on me? Run along now and find your sergeant."

"I can't find him, sir," said Artie. "He was killed last night during the shelling."

"Was he!" exclaimed the major. "That's too bad. I didn't know that. Yes, yes; that's terrible. Yes, we lost a lot of good boys last night. Hope we don't lose any more, but I'm afraid we will.

"Well, you know what you're supposed to do of course. You know where your regiment is, don't you?"

Artie cleared his throat slightly.

"No, sir; I don't. The sergeant knew where they were goin'. They was in a piece of woods when I left them."

He brightened visibly.

"I could find them though, sir, easy enough."

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"I dare say," said the major dryly, "but you won't need to just yet. We have telephone communication now, and won't need to send you back unless that fails. Meanwhile stay near at hand where I can get hold of you in a hurry. This will be the P. C. for a while yet, and the adjutant will always be here to watch things. I will have to go about continually making dispositions and so forth, so you will consider any orders the adjutant gives as coming from me direct."

"Yes, sir," said Artie and was about to withdraw when there was a high buzzing, like a gigantic hornet, and a sudden sound as of ripping cloth.

Every one rushed out. They were just in time to see a great thing like an enormous fish turn slowly on its side and head back over the hill again. On its glistening side they could make out a square cross with very thin arms. Another rip and it was gone.

"A boche plane!" exclaimed the doctor.

"That's what it was," agreed the adjutant. "Did you see the cross on it?"

"By George, he was flying low. Wonder what our machine guns are doing that they don't get after him?" said the major. "Better run up the hill, captain, and see if any one is hurt."

The doctor departed at a run. He really should have waited until the wounded were brought down to him, otherwise the stretcher-bearers would be chasing him all over the place, which is scant amusement with two hundred pounds of doughboy on the stretcher.

"Look out!" cried the major suddenly. "Here he comes again!"

"He" rolled lazily into sight over the top of the hill, shut off his motor, banked around, fired his machine gun at everything in sight, dropped two bombs and departed amid a faint-hearted popping of rifle fire. No breakneck speed, no hurrying haste, no sudden rush from the clouds; just a calm, take-your-time-about-it sort of thing—perfectly harmless play.

An officer came speeding down the hill.

"Major," he cried, "where are our airmen? How long is this going to keep up? That —— German knocks out about ten men every time he comes over. This is terrible!"

The major pursed his lips and looked uncomfortable.

"We might phone for some anti-aircraft guns," he decided. "Maybe I can get some machine guns over here."

He looked inquiringly at the adjutant.

"I think, sir, that if perhaps everybody were to fire simultaneously when the plane was overhead we might bring him down or at least scare him away."

The adjutant looked around for approval.

"Good enough," said the major. "That's just what we'll do. Captain, you post yourself on the flank and blow your whistle for the command to commence firing. Then let 'em blaze away."

The captain hurried off to impart his orders to his platoon leaders. The company lay in their fox-holes, watching the sky and gripping their rifles tightly. There was a ridge just beyond the hill they were on, and this shut off the view somewhat. The German would fly up over the trees and be on them before they knew it.

The German did not return. After waiting an hour or so for him, the infantryman grew tired of it and began to wander around the hill once more. The aviator surmised perhaps that they would arrange to receive him the next time he called, and that was why he stayed away.

Toward dinner-time things began to look more like war. Shelling started again, not on the hill-top but in the woods to the right and off to the northwest, where another company of this regiment had dug in. The company that Artie was with were on the crest of a small knob that stuck up like a fat man's nose.

To the east there were a number of small hills with a ruined town peeping over one of them. North was a ridge, crowned with woods. There were more woods to the left, not so shattered as some they had passed on the march but still rather mangy-looking.

Southwest was a very high, cone-shaped hill with a large town on the top, amid the ruins of which could be seen a church with two towers and a great square house. This was Montfaucon, a place that has been one of gloom and horror and dead men's bones for centuries. Montfaucon sticks up from the surrounding country like a helmet from the center of a table, and in bygone days there was a gallows on the top of it on which thieves and murderers were hanged and their bodies left to rot, where all the valley of the Meuse could see and shudder.

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Just now there were mysterious clouds of smoke around the base of the hill and flashes of light in the air where shrapnel was bursting and clouds of dust rising from the streets. German and Yank were at death grips in those houses and were killing each other in the parlors. Both sides were shelling the place heavily, and both armies were under fire from their own guns more than half the time.

Artie sat on the crest of the hill and contemplated the scene. Now and again a shell would burst with a tremendous cloud of smoke off in the woods or over on the hills, and a high cloud of dirt would leap to the heavens and then come tumbling down again.

Artie wondered why his hill was not being shelled. Perhaps it was, and the shells that were bursting in the woods or out in the fields were "shorts" or "overs" or "rights" or "lefts."

The infantrymen stood around with affected nonchalance, though with a wary eye to the nearest hole in case of accident. They were already accustomed to the sound of shells and no longer hurled themselves to earth every time they heard one on its way.

The doctor, on his way back to the P. C. from a dressing-station he had established on the east side of the hill, dropped down beside Artie and offered the artilleryman a tailor-made cigaret. He was lonesome, and officers can yearn for some one to talk to just the same as any one else.

"Tell me, artillery, how much of this sort of thing have you seen?" he began.

"I been in 'em all, sir," said Artie bashfully.

"Is this all they do?" waving his hand at the surrounding country. "Just pound away at vacant fields?"

"Well, those shells are meant for us, I guess; but you see it's kind of hazy, and Fritz can't tell where they're goin' very well, or maybe he hasn't got the location right, or maybe some one figured the firing-data wrong. You know a little bit of a mistake at the guns will make a big difference on the other end. And then we're only in support. The fun won't start till we begin to advance."

"In your experience," said the doctor, "have you found the Germans cowardly as a rule? You know there's so much stuff in the newspapers about it that you can't believe."

Artie inhaled his cigaret and let the smoke blow deliciously through his nose before he answered. It was great to have an officer asking for his opinion on anything, let alone the caliber of the enemy.

"Well," began Artie, "as to that I can't say, bein' as how I've been on a gun all the time up till now. But I will say this: That Fritz is a —— fine shot with a field-piece when he can run up a balloon to spot the bursts for him, and he can lay down a barrage that will make you want to kiss yourself, when he's got a mind to it.

"And I'll say this too: We never went through the German lines like he went through ours this Spring. No; I don't really know nuthin' about it, because as I say I never come to hand-holts with no Jerry. I had a good job on a gun; but I wanted to be a liaison man 'cause they never seemed to be doin' any work; and here I am, and I wish I was in —— 'fore I ever come here."

"You aren't afraid, are you?" smiled the doctor.

"Yes, sir; I am. And furthermore any one that says he ain't, or never was, is about the biggest kind of a liar I know. They're all afraid, all of 'em; you bet they are, and then some. There's one big favorite medicine the medical corps can leave behind when they come up to the front, and it ain't iodin either. No, sir. But I've got a extra reason this time."

Artie exhaled smoke through his nose and paused a moment. It would be all right if he told the doctor his secret, because the doctor, being an officer and a captain at that, would certainly not have designs on a poor buck private's roll. So he recounted the story of the five hundred francs and his premonition that death would prevent his enjoying them.

"I got a leave coming to me," concluded Artie, "because I didn't get any when we was in rest billet the last time. You see they wouldn't let none go on leave 'less he had a hundred francs, which none had.

"Well, one guy went round and borrowed a hundred francs, ten of it here and five of it there, and twenty of it somewhere else, and showed it to the captain, and the captain signed his pass and away he went. So then some more guys tried it and got away with it, all usin' the same roll.

"Well, it happened that the captain was eatin' some bread and jam, and his fingers

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was a little sticky, and he got some on the money. The next guy comes up and shows the captain a roll of francs with grape jam on 'em. The captain signs the pass and calls the top kick.

"Up steps the next guy with his roll, and it's got jam on it too. The captain makes a little mark on one of the bills with his pen, kinda absent-minded like, and looks out the window of the billet, where the whole outfit is lined up to get passes.

" 'I never knew what a bunch of millionaires I had,' he says, and goes on signin' passes.

"After retreat they was to go, the men that was goin' on pass. I was on kitchen police that day; that's how come I wasn't in line.

"Well, after retreat the old man announces that inasmuch as he'd signed ninety-four passes on the strength of the same hundred francs, and four men had got away with it and it was a pretty bright stunt after all, that he wouldn't do nothin' about it but see that the men that tried to get away with it, and didn't, wouldn't get another pass till they held a ski-jumpin' contest in ——, and them that did get away with it would get some nice job when we went to the front again.

"As for the hundred francs, so many men had said it was theirs that he didn't know whose it was, so he'd confiscate it for the mess fund. But bein' on K. P. that day, I wasn't mixed up in it, so I still got a leave comin'."

"I'll take care of your francs," said the doctor, "if you want me to."

"Well, thank you, sir, that ain't the point. I ain't afraid of losin' them; I got 'em in my shirt pocket. It's me that I'm afraid of losin'. If you could take care of me now, so that I could be sure of gettin' out safe——"

"By ——! Here's our friend again!"

The plane swooped at them from the clouds like a hawk. Shouts, a wild clamor of whistles, a humming of machine guns, then the sharp explosions of the bombs the plane had hurled. Men began to cry for first aid.

This was no lazy rolling plane, firing a few rounds and then away, but a mad, buzzing thing that darted here and there, its gun going continually and dropping bombs by the handful. It combed the knob thoroughly, and then slid off down the valley, leaving a badly shattered outfit behind.

Artie watched the plane slide away like a swooping bird. There was another company down there in that underbrush; that plane was low— There! A perfect blast of rifle fire leaped from the woods. The men there had watched the raid on the knob and had made preparations for the reception of the visitor. The plane turned on its tail madly, then pointed its nose for the heavens and began to climb.

"He's hit, he's hit!" screamed Artie dancing up and down in his excitement.

The soldiers cheered wildly as the German turned lamely around, wabbled a bit and then bore down on them again with terrific speed. The soldiers fled. They had seen that bird do its stuff before.

Artie stood petrified with terror. He could move neither hand or foot as the German rushed nearer and nearer, so close now that it seemed it must crush him to earth.

When the plane struck the ground with a terrific crash not ten feet away, Artie's heart took to its dugout. If those Huns started a scrap now, and Artie's pistol in his fox-hole, wrapped in his blankets to keep the dampness away, farewell!

There were two men in the cockpit of the airplane, goggled and helmeted. They lifted their hands to their shoulders in a gesture of surrender and began to scramble out of their ship.

Artie ran over to help them. Behind him rose a snarling roar, and he turned to see what looked to be a very fine bayonet charge bearing down on him and the two Germans.

The aviators raised their hands again, much as one would say "The jig's up; we're licked," and then stood calmly waiting the rushing doughboys. Artie wondered rather nervously if he was due to be spiked along with the Germans, but there was no danger. The major and his staff and the company commander appeared suddenly and halted the onrushing line.

"Hold up men; hold up; they've surrendered. Steady there; hold up now."

"They're both hit," called Artie loudly. "They can't hurt none."

The Germans removed their goggles and their queer helmets with a leather ridge on the top, like a cock's comb. The pilot was

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shot through the hand, and him they led down the hill to the dressing-station. The other man, the machine-gunner, was shot through the body and through both legs. Only an iron nerve had kept him on his feet, for when they started to take him away he collapsed utterly.

A hospital-corps man stripped off the German's leather coat. He had yellow shoulder-straps on his gray blouse with a red propeller embroidered on them, and wore breeches and wrapped puttees of the same pattern as those of the Allies. He was very dark, with black hair and a tiny mustache, and had very sharp black eyes. He was mortally wounded and must have realized it, yet the defiant look never left his face, and his eyes kept searching the skies all the time his wounds were being dressed.

The infantry thronged around the plane in ever increasing numbers. It was a two-seater, painted in a checkerboard pattern of blue and pink, very difficult to see against a cloud, particularly if the sun were shining on it. The machine gun stuck up out of the rear of the cockpit with a long streamer of empty ammunition-belt hanging from it.

There were two bombs hung in a little rack on the outside of the fuselage. They were red with a bit of brass tubing sticking out of the business end and two tin wings to guide them by. They looked a lot like overgrown firecrackers.

There was a bit of colored ribbon tied to the rudder. Very probably it belonged to the sweetheart of the handsome machine-gunner.

The soldiers hunted for bullet-holes, but there were not a great many. Even though both men had been hit, they could have gained enough altitude to glide into their own lines but for the fact that a bullet had gone through the gas-tank, tearing away one corner of it, so that the juice had immediately run out and the engine stopped perforce.

The crowd continued to increase. It was amazing, the enormous number of men that rushed up that hill in the first few minutes after the plane had come down. Artie strove to battle his way through the crowd.

"Keep back!" he cried. "Every plane this side o' —— will be over here now! Lemme out! Don't crowd up here, you guys! Ain't you got no sense?"

He was a voice crying in the wilderness. Officers and privates shoved and pushed for their first sight of an airplane shot down in battle. Artie met the doctor shoving his way in.

"Captain," cried he, "don't go back there! The Dutch will shell and raid this place now for weeks! I see a plane brought down once before. They just raise ——!"

"I've got to get that aviator fixed up," said the captain. "He'll die, but I want to give him a little morphin so that he'll go easier."

With a humming roar like a swarming hive a group of fighting planes sailed over the north ridge and were above the fallen plane. Their guns roared in crescendo as they banked around; bombs crashed; the planes swooped down almost to the ground, so close that the men on the ground could see the goggled figures peering at them over the side and the machine-gunners swinging their weapons to a new target.

Few, however, cared to look. They were mostly going away from there, going as fast as they could—not to any particular place, but just away. The place became a shambles. There was no overhead cover anywhere except in the woods, and the men were shot down like rabbits as they ran.

The planes, six of them, circled and swooped up and down the valley, climbing straight into the air and then diving downward again, so that the pilot could use his gun as well as the gunner in the cockpit. Whenever there was a group of soldiers clustered under a shelter half or a blanket a bomb would be dropped. For the rest the Germans kept up a rain of machine-gun fire on the knob, on the slope of it and on the valley on either side.

They seemed determined to destroy the fallen ship; but though bombs fell continously around it none of them happened to be hit. The dying airman must have been plainly visible to them, but none of them held their hands on his account. Perhaps they thought he was already dead.

Then suddenly the enemy was gone. Some mysterious signal passed, some warning flashed from an invisible ship high in the air, and the attacking squadron flew off to the north and vanished over the tops of the trees.

Artie rose from the ground half-way down the slope where he had cast himself,

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and wondered if he were still alive. Red Cross men and stretcher-bearers began to hustle about to take care of the wounded. A surprizingly large number of the prone figures got up and shook themselves as soon as the Germans had gone; but a considerable number still lay as they were, some silently, some loudly demanding first aid, according to the severity of their wounds.

Artie went down to the P. C. but found no one there. He waited a few minutes until the doctor came in to telephone for more ambulances.

"Hello there, artillery. I see they didn't get you after all. You know, I thought we were both gone when that plane came down so near us. I expected he'd cut loose with his machine gun. I suppose you thought your five hundred was gone and yourself with it."

"No," said Artie. "The only thing I thought was that after lugging that golrammed pistol all over France, when I got a chance to use it I didn't have it on."

"You'll get a chance to use it now all right," said the doctor. "We're going to advance in about an hour. We'll just about have the wounded out of here by then. We've lost about fifteen per cent of our effectives now, and not in action yet."

Artie sought the open air. He needed a bracer. The sun was beginning to set behind Montfaucon, where the shrapnel was still winking.

The artilleryman could hardly believe that it was only yesterday that he had watched the sun go down behind the dead wood, and that so many things had happened in the interval. The sergeant's death, that was the worst.

Artie was stricken with a strange horror, a kind of stage fright. Suppose the infantry became involved in some fearful mess up there in the woods, surrounded perhaps, and he, the supposed liaison expert, were called upon for his opinion on some question. He wouldn't know what to say or what to do. His sole idea of liaison was firing rockets from a large brass pistol, and that upon the firing of a smoke bomb, meaning, "We have reached our objective," the artillery would cease to fire until further notice.

If he had only told the major the truth, that he was just learning! But then if he had they would have given him a rifle and made a doughboy out of him. Poor Artie groaned in agony of spirit.

"If I was only back in Bethel," said he aloud, "milkin', the cows and carryin' slop to the pigs, I'd be the happiest man in all creation, that I would."

Then he went off sadly to get his pack together and grease the eyepieces of his mask so that his breath wouldn't cloud them. Advance, huh? What did they want to advance for? Wasn't they bein' killed off fast enough where they were?

The order had evidently gone forth, for when Artie arrived at his fox-hole the infantrymen were industriously oiling their rifles and making up their packs; there was a very bustling and excited scene of preparation. Several of them had removed their clothing, and were greasing themselves with some mysterious compound as Indian braves used to do on the eve of war.

"That's a new one on me," muttered Artie. "I wonder if they put on war-paint too. Hey, soldier," he cried to a fat doughboy who was sadly inspecting a can of beans, "what's those birds greasin' themselves for? They expect to do some swimmin'?"

"Why, you *must* be a John," sneered the fat man. "They're greasin' themselves with that stuff so that they won't get burned with mustard gas."

"John ——!" said Artie hotly. "I was at the front and wounded and back at the front again before you was drafted!"

The fat man's jaw dropped.

"Was you though?" he said. "Well, maybe you can tell me one thing. How are we goin' to know when we get into a battle? I thought we was in it when them balloons got shot down. Then I thought we was in it when we got shelled last night, and I was sure we was in it when them airplanes come over, and now the old man says we're two miles behind the lines."

"If you need to be told when we get to fightin', you come and ask me," said Artie, "and I'll tell you."

THE company moved off just after nightfall, each platoon marching by itself in extended order. None knew where they were going but the officers, who guided themselves by their compasses.

Once over the first ridge the men were in the depths of a thick woods, dark as a wolf's stomach, pathless, horrible. Each

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man held to the pack of the man in front of him, and so kept on the right track, otherwise they would all have been lost. The battalion staff still marched with the center company, and Artie stumbled along clinging to a runner.

The advance came under shell-fire almost as soon as they entered the woods. Fritz, however, was shelling blindly, firing with shrapnel and high explosive on the idea that there must be troops moving in those woods, even if he could not see them. Consequently the worst effect of the enemy fire was on the nerves of the men, for though the shells burst all about them, only a few did any damage.

The advance went on, stopped for endless waits and then began again just as the men were thinking they might snatch some sleep. In one of the halts the man ahead of Artie turned and whispered—

"You got any chow?"

"I got a can of hardtack. I et up all my other stuff."

"They didn't issue none out before we left, did they?"

"Didn't see 'em. You got any?"

"Not a —— thing," said the doughboy, "and no chance to get any either."

"Well, ain't that ——!" said Artie.

"Cheer up," replied the infantryman. "Maybe we'll get killed and won't need to eat."

Time rushed by with incredible speed. Artie was startled to find that his watch told him it was midnight. He wore it on the inside of his wrist, so that the luminous figures would not be visible; but many of the men were not familiar with that trick, and their watches would gleam through the murk like so many glow-worms.

This particular halt seemed to be endless. The front was very near, for the steady pounding of shells and the rattling of machine guns could be plainly heard. In the pauses the listening men could hear the intermittent *whack-whack-whack-whack* of rifle fire.

"Them's our guys," they whispered excitedly. "Ain't they giv'n' 'em ——!"

Overhead was a gentle whispering, a soft swish now and then.

"Where them shells goin'?" Artie's companion asked.

"Them whisperin' ones? Them's ourn. They're on their way to Fritz."

Whamt There was a pattering of falling twigs and stones, then a sliding crash as a tree, almost cut in two by the shell, fell to the ground.

"That's his'n," said Artie, and sniffed the reek of high explosive for signs of gas.

Throughout the rest of the night they lay there, listening to the whistling shells and the pounding of their hearts. This would be their second night without sleep; and the only real meal they had had since the drive had begun two days before had been their breakfast on the morning of the previous day. Now that they were about to be put to the supreme test, an assault of an enemy position, their vitality had been drained by lack of food and sleep. Moreover, it began to rain just before dawn, and the men who had thrown away their slickers to lighten their packs regretted it bitterly.

It was really broad day before the light penetrated the woods. The infantry began to move forward again, the men moaning with the agony of moving their cramped limbs. They were wet now and haggard, and here and there uniforms were beginning to give away, a little tear here, a burst seam there. Men began to slide off their packs and drop them in the underbrush when none was looking.

They were in new country now. Well-worn paths ran through the woods with signs made from boxes nailed to trees and directions painted in German on them:

"Zu Minnenwerfen Gruppen."

"Zu 5 Compagnie."

"Kommandantur."

The débris, blankets, rifles, etc., had up till now been all of American make; but now many of the blankets were gray; potato-masher bombs lay scattered about; there were gray overcoats with a wide green collar that the adjutant said belonged to a *Landwehr* division. The major didn't know whether they did or not. He said he thought they were Saxon troops in front of them.

Simultaneously with the appearance of a number of haggard specters among the trees machine-gun fire was opened on the infantry from the flank. They lay down among the troops they had come to relieve—men with staring eyes, white-faced, bearded, their uniforms soaked with mud and hanging on them in rags.

"How long you been here?" asked Artie.

"——!" said the specter beside Artie, "a coupla weeks anyways."

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"You're crazy," said Artie. "The drive didn't start only day before yesterday."

"It seemed like a year," was the reply. "Got a cigaret?"

Artie gave him one.

"How far off are they?" he asked.

"The boche? About a hundred yards. This platoon o' mine is in support."

"How come we're under fire then?"

"Indirect. The German got a trench in there with lots o' pillboxes and things. We been hangin' on here by our eyebrows."

The machine-gun fire stopped. A shrilling of whistles and the line moved forward, stumbling over roots and stepping over bodies when they could see them and falling headlong over them when they could not. More haggard men passed them now, going to the rear, shambling as fast as they could to get out of range. The rattling of machine guns was continuous, but there was no shelling yet.

The advance knelt down again while the sergeants crawled up and down, making sure that every one's bayonet was fixed and whispering the last orders. There was no need to whisper; the enemy could not have heard them if they had shouted.

A tremendous crashing and rattling from the rear; the ponderous tramp of a herd of elephants; and a squadron of tanks rolled through the trees before the startled eyes of the infantry. They were the light French tanks, camouflaged, with an ace of spades or a heart or a mailed fist painted on the turret. Some of them were armed with a stubby one-pounder; others had a machine gun. Two tiny flags protruded from the turret of the foremost tank.

They plunged on, the doughboys leaping out of the way and then following in the wake of the tanks to the accompaniment of the shrill whistling of the officers. Shells began to fall heavily in front of them—*wham! wham! wham!* throwing up an enormous cloud of smoke. There was a bellow of command; shouts.

"Let's go!" they cried. "Let's go!"

And the assault was on.

Artie was wild with excitement. He had not known that they were to make an assault; he had thought they were just going to hold a position. The division of which this regiment was a unit had leap-frogged the division it had relieved; that is, it had advanced through its position and then begun an assault.

On the tick of a second the entire American army on all that vast front had moved forward in a maneuver similar to a line-buck by a football team; only instead of eleven men there were eleven divisions with all their aircraft, their tanks and their artillery, going forward shoulder to shoulder to shove the enemy back by main strength.

Artie noticed that the shells falling in front of them kept going forward as the line advanced.

"Why, that's our barrage!" he told himself, disgusted that he had not thought of it before.

He wondered why there was not enemy fire; they had been shot up by machine guns farther back than that already. The reason was that there had been a preliminary bombardment of the German positions for some time before the push began, and what few machine-gunners were left were keeping underground.

Artie saw his fat friend of the afternoon before go by.

"The fightin's begun!" cried Artie; but the fat man kept his protruding eyes rigidly in front of him.

Artie was wrong. The fighting was not yet.

The smoke of the barrage began to thicken and obscure the sight. The rain still fell, and the smoke stayed on the ground and did not dissolve. Units began to intermingle; all sense of direction was lost; the men began to wander about in the smoky woods without the slightest idea of where they were going.

Then they reached the first German machine guns.

It was a startling thing to come suddenly upon a shallow pit, to see a machine gun pointed in one's direction, a pile of ammunition-belts, some stick bombs and two or three huddled gray figures. They took some prisoners here, most of them wounded.

The men would come suddenly upon a German, his hands upraised, saying, "*Kamerad!*" or grinning, and they would stand on one foot and then the other, not knowing whether to bayonet him out of hand or go on and leave him. Usually some non-com. would detail a man to take the prisoner to the rear; sometimes they would just go on and leave him standing there, telling him roughly to keep his hands in the air lest he get himself spoiled. It never occurred to

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the infantry that the Germans had no idea of what was being said to them.

Men began to drop. There were shells bursting now that were not those of the barrage. The noise was terrific.

The captain of the center company, with the major and the adjutant, were a little way in front of Artie, and he saw the captain hold up his hand and then motion to the men to lie down. They needed no second command. Men saw other men on either side of them lying down, and so the order was passed along even if it could not be transmitted by voice, or the signal seen. The company had come under fire from a machine gun in front of them somewhere.

The tanks hurried forward and could be seen crashing here and there in the woods like so many hounds; but the gun continued to fire. Artie crawled up to the major and bawled in his ear:

"I think he's in a tree, sir. Look at the marks of the bullets."

And he pointed to fresh scars on a tree-trunk, running slantwise like rain.

The major nodded and bawled an order to one of the runners, who crawled off. After a little while some six or seven men came up inching along on their left sides and holding their rifles very carefully out of the wet. They were the sniper squad, the expert riflemen of the company.

The major showed them the marks on the tree. They needed no further explanation but crept away, each of them sheltering himself behind a different tree; and then, very much as their forebears had potted the Indians, they set themselves to work to shoot this bird out of his tree. It might be any one of a hundred trees, but the slant of the bullet-marks gave them a good idea of where he was. They set the sights carefully, and one man lighted a match to blacken his. The machine gun sniper saw him first.

He was, however, the last casualty from that particular gun, for those watching men had seen the slightest tremble of the leaves in a big oak and immediately began to search among its leaves with their rifles. Slowly, carefully, they fired, as if on the range, up, down and across, covering every inch of foliage. At last, when they were about ready to call it a mistake and decide that the leaves had been moved by something else, a machine gun tumbled out of the tree, and shortly thereafter a gray bundle slid down and struck the earth with a dull thump.

Whistles shrilled, and the line moved forward again. They were forced to crawl now, for bullets were singing over them; but the casualties were few. They had perhaps reached a dead space, a place where the German guns could not be depressed sufficiently to sweep the ground. That was probably the reason the sniper had been in the tree. There was no shelling now by either side.

Twice the advance was held up. The first time a tank spotted a tree and brought the machine-gunner out of it in quick time. The second time the rifle squad was called on again, and it took them the better part of an hour to bring down two, first one and then the other from the same tree.

Artie, plastered with mud and wet to the skin, found himself beside the major in one of the stops.

"You still here?" the major greeted him. "You'd better get yourself a rifle; it will be more good than a pistol, and if we run into any stiff resistance we will need all the rifle power we can get. Stay right around now; my runners are all gone, and I may need you."

Swoosh-BLAM! The adjutant shuddered convulsively. The major wiped the dirt from his eyes and spat to clear his mouth.

"God, that was near!" he cried. "The adjutant's hit; I heard it strike him."

Artie shook his head to stop the ringing in his ears, and he and the major turned the adjutant over on his back. There was nothing they could do.

The wood began to grow lighter, and then the trees ceased altogether. The advancing troops found themselves on the edge of a glade, in the center of which was a growth of shoulder-high bushes. The ground sloped down to these bushes and then rose on the far side where the woods began again.

"There's a brook in there," thought Artie to himself. "That's what makes them bushes."

On the other side the forest continued, great, solid trees, large of girth, oak for the most part, and ash. There was something threatening about that silent wall of forest, something sinister, that chilled the blood.

The advancing lines halted, while the tanks waddled down the slope. At once a red rocket shot from among the farther trees, up, up, into the rain and the mist,

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curved and then floated gently down, still glowing redly. At once there was a wild roar from the infantry.

"The boche!" they cried. "The boche! There they are!"

Then the fun began.

The Americans leaped to their feet and dashed down the slope. They were sick of being shot at by an unseen foe; they were sick of crawling on their stomachs through wet woods; they wanted something tangible to fight, some one that they could see. The boche was there; they had seen him among the trees.

"Let's go and get him," they said.

The heavens fell on them. Far back in the German lines some observer or some rocket guard had seen that red light gleaming and had yelled for annihilation fire or drum-fire, or whatever the Germans called a barrage, and the barrage arrived.

The well of forest on the other side of the clearing was shut out entirely by a curtain of dirt and fire and smoke. The explosions were like the continous rolling of a gigantic drum. There was a sweetish smell in the air.

"Gas!" cried the major, and his flying helmet nearly cut Artie's nose off as he put on his mask.

Then they ran down the slope a way and lay down again.

The leading tank was almost through the bushes when its turret tipped sidewise suddenly and it disappeared. The tank with the little flags on it turned abruptly at right angles and went off to the flank, the rest of them waddling obediently after it.

The doughboys made another rush that took them well into the open. A plane was whirling about overhead, ducking and turning and jumping about to avoid being hit by fire from the ground.

"It's one of ours!" yelled the major. "Spread your laundry!"

Two of the infantrymen began to put out some squares of white cloth on the ground, and the sergeant major did likewise. He was hit almost immediately; but the signal was seen, for the plane fired a light in answer and flew off.

The white pieces of cloth—plaques they were called—told the airman what unit it was that he saw, and he was off to report their progress. Visibility was very low due to the mist and rain; balloons were useless; there were no wires of course; the runners were all casualties, and the airmen had to fly so low in order to see anything at all that many of them were shot down. The High Command was therefore rather at a loss to know what was going on and very eager for news of any troops at all.

The infantry made another rush and were among the bushes. The fire here was tremendous—high explosive, shrapnel and machine gun. The air was thick with grenades.

And then they knew why this spot had been chosen as the one where the line of resistance should be. In the center of the clearing where the bushes were was a swamp; and in the swamp, the posts buried deep in the mud, too deep to dislodge except with special tools, was a thick maze of wire.

The infantry ran into it, fell over it, became entangled in it in the twinkling of an eye. The machine guns hammered them unmercifully.

The men hacked at the wire with their bayonets and beat at the posts with their gun-butts, but there was no breaking through. If one strand gave there were fifty more in back of it. The farther into the wire the Americans advanced the thicker it grew and the slimmer the chance of their reaching the far side.

One man had a pair of gigantic shears with which he snipped the strands like so much thread. There had been a lot of these shears in the company when the march began; but they were heavy, and the men that carried them had let them idly slip from their hands during the halts, and now they were paying for it with their lives. The man with the shears was hit, and they fell from his hands into the swamps and were lost.

Artie and the major and a sergeant of the signal corps were together knee-deep in the swamp. A grenade burst near them, showering them with mud, and the fragments buzzed by their ears. The smoke was horrible, and the muddy water had splashed on the eyepieces of their masks so that they could hardly see.

Through rifts in the smoke they could make out men trying to climb through the wire, men aiming and firing their rifles, men hurling grenades. The infantry floundered in the mud; they tried to lie down, but the wire prevented.

After a moment or two there were not so

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many men in sight who were doing anything. Most of those that were visible had their feet in the air where they had fallen headlong over some wire; some hung half-sitting, half-lying down; one hung over a strand by his waist directly in the field of fire from a machine gun, for his body swung and jerked continually as the bullets passed through it.

Behind the cover of his gas-mask the major was weeping bitterly and calling upon God to kill him, for he had brought these men into this slaughter-house. His head was bowed in his hands, and Artie thought he had been hit.

The artilleryman wiped the lenses of his mask and peered about but could see no living man except one or two that were crawling back to the shelter of the woods. His mind was in no condition to reason; he never knew why he did it, but he began to crawl along a little alleyway in the wire. He remembered the major's advice about the rifle and took one that had been shoved through the strand by a man as he fell.

The alley came out on a narrow stone causeway which Artie recognized as a dam that had been built to make a small pond there, so that the people who had lived there before the war could have water to wash their clothes in. When he had been in the bushes the bullets had been all about him; he could hear them spatting in the mud and whacking against the snaky posts that held the wire; but now that he was on the causeway he seemed to be unmolested.

Artie gripped his rifle and proceeded to crawl along the stones toward the German lines. He felt a strange calmness; he knew that he was going to his death, but the thought only spurred him on. He felt very sick at his stomach.

Had Artie been an older soldier or had he been with the infantry before, he would have recognized what he was on at once. Both sides would leave lanes in their wire for raiding-parties to go in and out, and this was one of them. However, there was almost always a machine gun, sometimes two, at the end of the lane; sometimes it was closed by a wire gate with a trip that exploded a bomb when disturbed.

A wiser man would have turned back; but Artie kept on, and his guardian angel brought him out to the end of the causeway, where he could reach out and touch the machine-gun crew that guarded it.

Artie looked at that gun long and earnestly. It was pointed away from him, so that he could see the gray-black side of it. A pipe ran down from it that carried off the steam from the water-cooler.

There was a little cone-shaped thing in the front of it, like a tin horn, that hid the flash of the gun from any one unless he was directly in front of the muzzle, when of course it was immaterial whether he saw the flash or not.

There were three men by the gun, craning their necks and looking over into the swamp. The belt was running gleefully through the breech, and the ejected shells shot out in a steady shower.

Artie cast away his helmet and tore off his mask as a baseball catcher clears his vision for a close play at the plate.

"You ——!" said Artie, and went at them.

The three looked up, startled, as Artie bore down on them. The first one Artie shot, and the German dropped just in time to knock the muzzle of the machine gun backward as the man at the thumb-pieces swung it in Artie's direction. The second man stumbled back with his face crushed in with the butt; but the third had Artie around the waist before he could recover from his swing, and they stumbled back into the gun-pit, tripped over the tripod and then went down, the German on top, but his legs were lifted in the air by the tripod, and his head fell just by Artie's shoulder.

The German reached for his pistol with his free hand and as he did so turned his head so that his neck lay just across Artie's gasping mouth. So then Artie instinctively clamped shut his teeth, and hung on until the other man grew limp. Then he pushed him aside, got up and spat effusively. He picked up his rifle, the butt broken off at the small of the stock by the blow he had given the second German, and sat down by the side of the path from the causeway, where it ran back into the woods.

"Now," said he aloud, "I'm dead and I know it, but let me see some —— come down this path."

BACK in the woods the remnants of the company still clung to their ground. Some automatic rifleman had come up, and a few one-pounders. They discerned a movement in the woods

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across the swamp; gray figures began to appear in the bushes; shells began to fall in back of the Americans, shutting off any possible reenforcements.

"They're going to rush us," muttered the Yanks and gripped their rifles and tried to stop shaking and were horribly afraid that some one would think they were afraid.

The enemy rushed them, and did it thoroughly, as Fritz always did things. An enormous mob poured through the lanes in the wire, giving forth a loud croaking like a bunch of frogs in a pond. Probably they were chanting:

"Hoch! Hoch!"

They swept up the slope and over the Americans as the surf sweeps over rocks, but though the surf covers the rocks from sight they are still there.

It is a cheering sight to see a long column of Germans, dirty, tired, shamefaced and dumb, trudging along a road on the way to the prison pens. It is quite another thing to meet them in a patch of woods with a barrage thundering in back of one and an avalanche of bloodthirsty *hoch*-ing Huns bearing down, equipped with bayonets that have a saw on the back edge to pluck out one's entrails when the blade is withdrawn. Particularly is this bad when there are about four Huns to every American.

The Yanks rose up, every one where he stood, and did his best with what he had. The auto rifles did terrible execution as the enemy crossed the open space; the one-pounders barked; machine guns pounded.

There were a lot of Yanks in the swamp who were still alive, and they stood up in the wire and stabbed at the Germans as they went by. When the rush reached the woods the Americans fired into the gray of it until their magazines were empty; then with clubbed rifles, bayonets, and fists they let Fritz know that he had a fight on his hands.

The roar of machine guns swelled louder; a tank appeared on the far side of the swamp; then American troops appeared beside it and began to fire into the rear of the Germans. The enemy turned around, saw that the situation was rapidly becoming dangerous and then began to retire.

They went back hastily through the lanes in the swamp, and the men who still lay in the wire reached out and tripped them and knocked them into the mud, and then stabbed them to death with their trench knives. The Germans, however, took back a number of prisoners.

Now when Artie had crawled along the causeway the reason that the gun that guarded it had not been turned down it was that a machine-gun crew had just gone that way with the intention of getting it on the American flank. This crew, who had just about set up their gun when the rush began, were unable to fire for fear of hitting their own men.

When the rushers fell back the machine-gun crew decided they would do likewise. They even neglected to bring back their gun.

Some went one way and some another, but two went back along the causeway just in time to collide with the major, who had followed Artie down the lane. They kicked his pistol out of his hand and invited him to go to Germany with them.

Artie, who had both seen and heard the rush and who had given up all hope of life, saw the two Germans come running down the path, giving the major what used to be known as the bum's rush. He arose to meet them, swinging his broken rifle by the barrel. They went off into the brush as fast as might be, ducking and dodging lest he shoot at them. They had no further interest in the major.

The major pulled out his gas-mask from the side of his face.

"Are you hit badly?" he asked Artie.

"I ain't hit, sir," said Artie. "The tube of your mask is shot in two."

"Why, so it is," said the major. "Well, I'm glad of an excuse to take it off."

Which he did.

"Now then, that was a close squeak. Much obliged. I don't blame them for running; you're a weird sight. Come on now; let's go; we've got work to do yet."

Indeed Artie was a weird sight. He was plastered with mud from crawling in the swamp; he was hatless, and the front of his blouse was soaked with the blood from the machine-gunner's throat. It was this last that had led the major to believe that Artie had been hit.

"Work to do! Isn't everybody killed?" Artie exclaimed.

"——, no! That was just a check. Keep close to me; you might come in handy again."

The tanks had crossed the swamp lower down where it was not so deep. They came

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in on the flank; a reserve battalion was *thrown* in, and the advance began again. They had not far to go. Just on the edge of the woods was the enemy trench. When it was enfiladed—that is, brought under a flanking fire by the tanks—its garrison lost heart and went away.

The American survivors of the affair in the swamp rushed over the parapet and began madly to bomb the dugouts. They were raging; they hungered for blood. God help the German that fell into their hands now!

The veneer of civilization that had taken ten thousand years to put on had peeled off in twenty minutes, and they had gone back to elemental savagery. They mopped up the trench, butchered what few of the garrison were foolish enough to remain and then dug in the farther wall to wait with what patience they might for a counter-attack.

"Come here, you," said the major to Artie, and he gave him an order.

Artie ran back along the causeway, hunted a while until he found the body of the sergeant major and then rearranged the plaques, forming a long cross, which with the signal that was already displayed would tell the first American airman that passed that the second battalion of the 'Steenth Infantry was in that woods and had reached its objective.

There was, however, no counter-attack. The division on the right and left pushed on, and the Germans retreated to prevent a salient being formed.

The following morning just before dawn the wreckage of the regiment was relieved. The remnant that was left lost no time in falling back, and by noon of that day they were back on the road again and out of range.

Here they sat down in the ditch to catch their breath and rejoice in their luck at being still alive, while the regiment waited for its various battalions to assemble. The second battalion was the last to arrive, and had by far the fewest men in it. The men in this battalion sat down in their turn and began to dig the mud off their shoes.

"What's eatin' that guy?" asked one of the men, pointing to a ragged, bearded, hollow-eyed man that sat with his head bowed on his knees.

"Nerves, I guess," said the other man. "That's the artilleryman that bit that German machine-gunner to death."

"Is that the guy? ——, he don't look like a fierce guy. Maybe it made him sick. Ain't that the colonel comin'? What the ——'s comin' off now?"

The colonel, a tall, thin man with a beaked nose, was accompanied by Artie's major and the regimental adjutant. They stopped where the man sat with bowed head and spoke to him. The man raised his head and disclosed himself as Artie.

"Your major has told me," said the colonel, "of the very fine work that you did during the assault yesterday. I want you to know that I appreciate it, and I'll see that it is brought to the attention of the proper authorities."

He moved on, and Artie sank down again in his rags and began to weep.

"Cheer up, guy," said one of the men near him. "You're all right now. Didn't yuh hear what the colonel said? He's goin' to get yuh a cross."

Artie put his hand into what had been his shirt and drew out a shapeless lump, a wad of paper soaked with water, smeared with the mud of the swamp, shredded by wire and daubed with blood from the German machine-gunner, so frayed and macerated and torn that all signs of its original character had been lost.

"To —— with the cross," sobbed Artie. "Look at my five hundred francs!"

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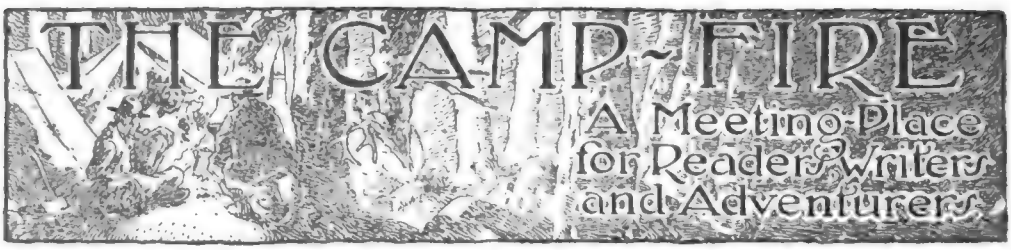

SOMETHING from Charles Victor Fischer concerning his story which appears in this issue:

Newark, N. J.

Yes, I know that this pidgin-English must sound phony to one who had never roamed the wilds of Guam. But it's perfectly O.K. I was attached to the radio station there for nearly two years, and this is exactly the way the natives used to talk to us, and we to them. There's a peculiarity of inflection, sort of a singsong jump and flop to the Guam natives' conversation, that's difficult to describe. He sings you a song when he talks to you. This, I suppose is owing to the narrow limitations of their own language. Their entire vocabulary comprising not more than four hundred words, they have to make one word do the work of many, depending more on tone of voice than pronunciation.

For instance, the word *affa*. It means anything they *make* it mean. You see a native woman coming along, leading a child by the hand. The kid's a little slow on the lead, its attention on a goat, pig, chicken just passed, thus causing the old lady much irritation. She turns in her wrath, with her bare foot gives the kid a side swipe on the rump and snarls—

"*Affa!*"

Two minutes later the same woman meets a friend. She smiles sweetly, bows sedately and softly murmurs—

"*Affa.*"

It's all in the tune.

About that joy-juice that grows in the trees. Most people out there call that stuff *tuber* (oo). I couldn't find that word in the dictionary, however, so decided on "toddy," which is another, though less popular, name it goes by.—CHARLES V. FISCHER.

FROM some comrade not giving his name but writing on stationery of the Board of Park Commissioners, Seattle, comes the following clipping from the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer* of May 14, 1923:

The end of the *Glory of the Seas*, fastest clipper ship in the world, came yesterday when she was burned on the beach at Endolyne near the Laurel Beach Sanitarium.

THIS beautiful vessel sailed all the great waters of the globe, touched at hundreds of strange ports with a haughty grace, furnished the inspiration, so it is said, of one sea tale of Robert Louis Stevenson's, and made the voyage from New York around the Horn to San Francisco in ninety days, a record never since surpassed.

Scarcely any one witnessed the burning of the historic old ship except the residents near the spot where she was beached last Winter, when she was bought by C. G. Tackaberry for wrecking. Attempts to sell her as a historic relic failed, and with reluctance Mr. Tackaberry decided to wreck her.

THE *Glory* was built in 1869 in East Boston by Donald McKay, famous builder of fine ships. Today her inglorious finish touches keenly perhaps only one man in Seattle, aged Andrew Lund, her captain during her record voyage, now a common seaman in vessels making this port.

Like that of his famous ship, Lund's fate has grown drearier with the years. According to the story he tells occasionally in his broken English to young seamen who marvel at their companion's age and vigor, he is the son of a wealthy man in Sweden and the brother of an admiral in the Swedish Navy, both of whom are now dead.

THE father's estate, consisting of acres of timber land in Sweden, Russia and Finland, is involved in a legal tangle which prevents Lund from claiming it, so he declares.

"I've heard old Captain Lund tell the story a good many times and also of his gallant trip on the *Glory*, when in spite of some rough weather she came through without a man or a sail lost, with a world's record for speed which no other clipper ship has ever since equaled," said C. Campion of the Pacific Steamship Company.

"He will be wretched now that the old *Glory* has had to be burned. And it is a shame that more public feeling can not be aroused over the preservation of such genuinely romantic old ships."

THE FOLLOWING from E. E. Harriman of "A.A." and our writers' brigade makes a sound point. The bite of an insect or reptile, not in itself fatal, may frequently cause death in certain circumstances:

Los Angeles, California.

I WONDER if circumstances do not alter cases *in re* the tarantula's bite. I have personally known of two deaths from it.

One was a contractor 44 years old, bitten on the scrotum while using a shack water-closet. The other an Indian girl of 8, bitten on the neck, near the jugular vein. The man died in 4 hours; the girl never reached the house, 60 yards away, but fell in the path and died in half an hour after being found.

No man expects a sting from a bald-faced hornet to kill, yet one boy who lived near me in Minnesota was stung on top of the head by such a hornet, just where the skull-plates join. He died before he had

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gone fifty yards. I was stung by one, on my upper lip, on a very hot day; I ran half a mile to get home, walked across one room, half-way across another and fell unconscious. My mother saved me by very prompt action, and she said I turned spotted from sole to crown, with greenish-yellow spots, like old bruises fading out.

REGARDING the bala ants Mr. Robertson mentions, we have red ants in Arizona that are from half an inch to three-quarters in length. A bite from one of them will cause a hard lump to appear under the skin, which will show a white ring and red center. The sensation is akin to the sting of the hornet mentioned, a combination of red-hot iron and sulfuric acid. Knibbs, Teaboldt and I fed a lot of these ants last June. I got more than 40 bites in one half-day, digging in prehistoric ruins. They were —— and then some.

I have no doubt that Dr. Robertson is right as regards the average, but bodily conditions are not always at their best and the power of resistance is lowered. Then a bite would have double the effect felt normally.

Anyhow, any one who wants to experiment in letting tarantulas, scorpions, Gila monsters and the like bite them, can have my share.

I HAVE read so many times, in Camp-Fire and other places, that there is really no record of a death from the bite of a Gila monster. Well, perhaps no record has been made in the county books, attested by physicians and scientists, but a local paper told of what happened to a man here in Los Angeles, years ago. I have talked with this man many times in the old days. He had a Gila monster that nabbed him by the hand. Got hold of the thick pad of flesh at the base of the thumb and hung on like a bulldog. The *Times* stated that all the flesh of that part rotted on his hand, that the putrefaction extended clear to the elbow, and that the man died about two weeks after being bitten. Now I submit that rotting by degrees is no more fun than being killed in two minutes by paralysis of the pneumogastric nerves or of the heart. So I shall shy at Gila monsters, as at sidewinders.

BUT here is one thing worth putting in Camp-Fire: A coral snake violates all rules. Instead of the arrow-shaped head, supposed to be a sure sign of a poisonous reptile, his is narrow, like that of a gopher snake or garter snake. He is 24 to 30 inches long. Instead of following the popular idea regarding coloring, he is a brilliant fellow, in black, red and yellow, which is often supposed to be a mark of a harmless reptile. Yet he is more dangerous than a rattler, because he never warns and his poison is fully as deadly as that of a sidewinder. Now, lest some boob mistake a useful king snake for a coral and kill him, let me give a rule that works correctly. If the yellow is between the red and black, look out. If the black is between yellow and red, pick him up.—E. E. HARRIMAN.

MANY of you will remember Dean Ivan Lamb, formerly of the Royal Flying Corps, serving there until our own entry into the war and with several German planes to his credit. I passed his letter on to Gordon MacCreagh, who remembered him at Manila in 1903 and was glad to get in touch with him again. To be exact, Gordon MacCreagh remembered "the Dean" in the cheerful and sincere act of offering to whip—But I suppose I oughtn't to tell that without a permit; and the Argentine is a long way off.

Mr. MacCreagh's acknowledgment of the Lamb letter follows it, in part.

Alegrete, Argentina.

It has been so long since I have written a letter that I almost have forgotten how. At the present I am operating an old Colt Gatling for the revolutionists under Honorio Leemos while waiting for a plane. I tried to steal a "Brequet" from the State forces, but somebody talked too much and I was forced to leave Porto Alegre rather hurriedly and ride across most of the State horseback.

To date have had only two minor brushes with the State troops that did not amount to much. Both forces, each consisting of about twelve hundred men, are in this locality and the big scrap is expected to come off within a week. Yesterday General Leemos received three hundred twenty rifles and sixty-five thousand rounds, which even things up as far as arms are concerned and, as we know the country and have the aid of all the people, we can not lose.

IN CASE you meet Gordon MacCreagh, please ask him if he was in Manila in 1903. I seem to remember some one by that name. Also for his information: There was a snake killed during the construction of the Madeira-Mamore R. R., near Abuna in 1911 that measured thirty-nine feet in length. The contractors, May, Jecky and Randolph have photographs, records and probably the skin. The writer, who was later employed on the above R. R., saw snakes that seemed fully fifty feet long, but then he had the "wind up" so badly that at least ten feet would be put down to imagination.

After the big scrap, I will probably go to Buenos Aires for a plane and fly it back here for "strafing" purposes.

For the day I am cut off the main force by high water and the State troops are close enough to make one uneasy.—DEAN IVAN LAMB.

AS TO forty-foot snakes. Here's something from Gordon MacCreagh after seeing the above letter:

New York.

Me, I'm one of those irreconcilables who follow on the tails of Profs. Hornaday, Ditmars and the like, and say, "If there's a snake more than 35 feet in length this side of the Eocene epoch y' gotta show him to me."

I heard about the Madeira-Mamore snake. Both Jecky and Randolph had long since left the country. So no records were available, much to my disappointment; for here was a case where responsible, well-balanced people talked of a forty-foot reptile. But there seems to be an inscrutable fate which withholds those things from an investigator.

To me the question seems reasonable. If there was so remarkable a trophy as a thirty-nine foot

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snake-skin anywhere, how come it has never shown up in any museum or been recorded as authentic in any publication devoted to natural history?

Further, s'pos'n' even the blame thing *did* turn up and *was* forty feet long; I know from experience that a twenty-foot snake will, with adroit pegging out, yield a twenty-four-foot skin.

Nossir. Regarding snakes I'm agnostic.—GORDON MACCREAGH.

THE following kick, a letter to me from Thomson Burtis, seems entirely justified. Criticize our stories by all means, but be sure your criticism is soundly based before you explode. And why be nasty about it? The number of nasty letters received here at the office is astonishingly small, but why write even one, especially to one of our writers, when you can present your point just as well in a decent, manly way? Why be a shrewish old woman or a smart-aleck little boy?

While as to the cooties who ask a favor but aren't fair enough to enclose a two-cent stamp *and* a self-addressed envelop to carry said favor to them—oh, well, why be a cootie?

I enclose my peeved and waspish reply to Mr. ——, together with his letter. If you don't care to have reader-critics receive that kind of letter, stick it in the waste-basket, of course. I wrote it because I am getting —— sick and tired of criticisms which are no criticisms at all (although that doesn't matter) but in addition are made contemptuously and in an obvious effort to show off how much the correspondent knows rather than how little the writer does. Why in —— don't these bozos that know so much read the story carefully enough to know what the writer is getting at?

TO ELABORATE a little, and possibly to suggest that a little paragraph in Camp-Fire might be devoted to the subject, here is the situation as I have found it. I get about one letter a day, on an average, from readers. Some of these are letters telling me how much they liked a certain story. Those are fine to get, of course. Others are requests for information of one kind or another, which I always answer to the best of my ability, frequently doing considerable investigating on aerodynamics and other things to make a proper reply. Incidentally, almost never do they enclose a stamped envelop or ever put out any thanks for the favor. But that's all right, as far as I'm concerned, because I am not in Pendexter's or Mundy's class in getting enough letters of that sort to make a material difference. The third class are good-natured letters including a criticism of some technical point. These are all right too, although in only one very minor case (of which I am not yet convinced that I was wrong) has the criticism ever held water. As an illustration of this, I might mention a good-natured old rancher who read a description of the McMullen-San Antonio railroad in which the cars were described as superannuated Pullmans. He wrote "the story is supposed to be laid in the Big Bend of Texas, and the main trunk lines run through it, consisting of up-to-date transcontinental trains," etc. The story was not in the Big Bend, the location and particular railroad was described fully, etc. It was his mistake in conceiving an idea far from the truth.

THE others, like the enclosed, are in the same class. No, they are in the fourth class: criticisms that are not only foolish, but made in an ill-natured way. I think all your writers are in the same class with me to this extent: that we try and try —— hard to make every bit of atmosphere and detail stand up, to write of only such places, events, characters and circumstances as we are absolutely familiar with, etc. For myself, I have deliberately held off on oil-field stuff, despite the fact that I have waded in the mud for hours getting color, talked with hundreds of oil-field men from roughnecks to oil-scouts, spent a night in the rain to see a gusher come in, etc. But until I know it inside out I'm laying the material to one side. And it's enough to get one's goat to have contemptuous smart alecks try to show how smart they are by making ridiculous criticisms.

Honestly, I appreciate real criticism. If any reader can spot a mistake that is a mistake, no matter how small, I'll thank him for it. But I don't care about writing several hours a month to reply to criticisms that would never be made if the critic read the passage he doesn't agree with a second time to make sure he was right.

Would a note in Camp-Fire urging readers to be sure they are right before sending in minute criticisms be out of order?—THOMSON BURTIS.

THE Peg Leg Smith mine—some interesting facts from a comrade in a position to know much of what little there is to know. He tells us where to find three peaks that may be Peg Leg's landmarks, but he doesn't advise anybody to bank too much on it. If Mr. Robert Hornbeck is among us, I hope he will talk to us at a future Camp-Fire.

Washington, D. C.

I surely sat up and took notice when I read the request for information regarding the Peg Leg Smith mine! In the accompanying sheets I have set forth my recollection of the result of my investigations, made some forty years ago almost "on the spot." Unfortunately a collection of my somewhat voluminous printed effusions was burned in California some years ago, and I have nothing but memory with which to depend upon for the facts. And at 71, as you will one day know, the memory is not always trustworthy. But in the main I have given facts. I did have the name of the doctor to whom Peg Leg gave the nuggets and the story, but it escapes me.

By the way, if some one will search the files of the Riverside (California) *Press* of about forty years ago he will find the full account of the mysterious fate of Cover, and also details of the story of the Peg Leg mine that led him and so many others to give it credit.

I hope some one else will come forward with their recollections of the affair. By the way, Robert

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Hornbeck of Del Paso Heights, Sacramento County, Cal., if still alive, could tell a good story about it. He was living in Riverside and I think was in the newspaper business at the time of the Cover affair. —G. F. WEEKS.

The Peg Leg Smith Story

Something like forty years ago I was employed on a newspaper in southern California, and made a specialty of "digging up" camp-fire yarns—*real* camp-fires, not the printed ones. Two in particular received considerable attention, and I went to more or less trouble in seeking out and questioning those having personal knowledge of them. One of these was the Peg Leg Smith story, and the other was the story of the Lost Ship of the Colorado Desert. Both of these I investigated so far as possible and wrote stories of both. The Lost Ship story was published in the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, and the Peg Leg Smith yarn in some other publication whose title escapes me at this distance of time.

THERE was undoubtedly a good foundation for the Peg Leg Smith story. Smith had lost a leg in an Indian fight, and in the course of his wanderings found himself at Yuma, then a small military post on the lower Colorado River. With a companion he was *en route* for California, and they struck out toward the west through an uncharted region. As was to have been expected, they lost their way and one day saw in the distance three conical hills, the central one being the loftiest. In order to obtain an idea of the region to the westward and of the best course to be pursued, they climbed the loftiest of the hills and after studying the landscape and deciding in what direction to direct their steps, had their attention attracted by some roughly shaped, blackened fragments of metal, which upon examination proved to be solid gold. The ground was thickly strewed with them. Filling their pockets, they resumed their journey, after having taken landmarks that might serve as guides in the future, when they planned to return and make themselves wealthy.

But they never returned. They were in a barren and waterless region, and while staggering over the sands, crazed with thirst, Smith's companion finally gave up the ghost, as have so many others who have in the past essayed to cope, while ill equipped, with the hardships of the desert. Smith brought up in the Sisters of Mercy hospital in Los Angeles, having been found unconscious by the roadside by some passing Good Samaritans. The suffering that he had undergone proved too much for him, and finally it became the duty of the attending physician to inform him that his days were numbered. When assured of this fact, he related the story of the gold discovery to the doctor, and gave him the nuggets that remained in his pocket. The doctor later on made several attempts to find the lost mine, but unsuccessfully. No one who has no knowledge at first hand of the old Colorado desert before its partial reclamation succeeded can have any idea of the terrible character of that region. Waterless, roadless and foodless, one must be well equipped in order to withstand the terrific hardship incidental to the attempt to traverse it.

LONG subsequent to Peg Leg Smith's death there was a wandering prospector who drifted into southern California and who brought with him nuggets that resembled the accounts given of those found by Smith. He was accustomed to use the proceeds of these nuggets in more or less riotous living, and when exhausted he took mysterious trips to the desert, in the direction of the Peg Leg Smith discovery, returning after an absence of several weeks with a fresh supply. He was watched and followed on more than one occasion, but always was suspicious and managed to elude pursuit. This fact and others as well, also the account of Peg Leg Smith's discovery and its result, came to the notice of two prominent residents of the then youthful colony of Riverside, named Russell and Cover. After careful and long-continued investigation, they decided that there was a good foundation of truth in the various accounts and decided to make a personal investigation. With a mule team and a good supply of food and water, they started on the search, approaching the desert through the well-known Walker's Pass route. After several days' search they came to what are known locally as the Bad Lands, rugged hills, split up by steep cañons, and impassable except on foot. Cover, who had visited this region before in the same search and knew more or less about its formation, directed Russell to drive around the base of the hills, while he himself proposed to cross the ridge on foot and meet him on the other side at a point which he described to his companion.

THE proposed meeting never took place. Cover did not show up at the point agreed upon, and Russell waited until the scarcity of his water and food supplies made it imperative for him to go back to civilization for assistance. An expedition was organized (if memory serves, it was under Masonic auspices) and a well-equipped party of considerable size went to the Bad Lands and made a thorough search. They went into the hills at the same point where Cover had bidden adieu to Russell, and combed them thoroughly, back and forth, but not a single trace of the missing man was ever found. A bandit who had been driven from a Montana mining-camp years before by a Vigilance Committee to which Cover belonged was reported to have been seen in this region, and it was believed by many that he had encountered him unexpectedly and had been murdered and his body secreted. No search could have been more thorough or painstaking, or more fruitless.

TWO or three years subsequent to this two San Francisco mining men undertook the search for the Peg Leg mine, having combined their own information with that which the writer was able to afford. I was invited to join the expedition, but the insistent demands of a large and phenomenally vigorous and hungry family made it impossible to forsake the newspaper desk for the hurricane deck of a mule. Their efforts too were fruitless.

All this took place before the reclamation by irrigation of that portion of the Colorado desert now known as the Imperial Valley, one of the most fruitful and productive portions of California, but which at that time was a waterless, barren desert waste.

IN 1901 the writer paid a visit to Yuma and to the scene of operations of the reclamation company, which was then just commencing its successful work. A trip into the interior was taken with a mule team for a goodly number of miles, following about

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the same route said to have been taken by Peg Leg Smith in his last journey. Recollecting the story of the three conical hills, the landscape was studied with care, and one day, away off to the northwest in the Superstition Mountains, so named from the veneration accorded them by the desert Indians, three conical peaks were made out on the distant horizon, the central one being the loftiest. At once the question arose in the writer's mind whether these were not possibly the Peg Leg Smith peaks. All the conditions seemed to reply in the affirmative. But a waterless stretch of many miles lay between the visitors and the hills, and it was impossible under the circumstances to make any attempt to solve the problem. But the hills are there yet, doubtless, and if any one wishes to visit them he can go to the base of Signal Peak, not far from the headworks of the original reclamation canal of the Imperial Valley and, by looking toward the northwest on a clear day, preferably early in the morning, as did the writer, with the rising sun bringing out the western horizon with clearness and sharpness, he will certainly be able to make out the three sharp peaks with the lofty central one.

Perhaps they are the landmarks of the Peg Leg Smith mine! Perhaps not! *Quien sabe?*

And perhaps the expedition noted in *Adventure's* note is acting on this very fact! For one, I shall be very glad to hear the result of the search.—G. F. W.

DON'T forget that "Still Farther Ahead," added to "The Trail Ahead," now gives you a general survey of what the next four issues of our magazine will contain.

CAMP-FIRE likes to give all hands a hearing. Bill Adams was one of several who have bemoaned the passing of the good old wind-jammer days, but here is a comrade to speak up for the modern day.

Romance, according to Mr. Kipling and others, is more likely to loom before our eyes from the past than from the present. Luckily it is the tendency of the average human mind to forget evil details and remember good; and "distance lends enchantment." There is, also, the everlasting conflict between the picturesque and the utilitarian. Also the contrast, real or fancied, between "those mother used to make" and those you can get anywhere in any quantity nowadays. Also a hundred other factors. In fact, there seems to be almost everything except the answer as to which is the more to be praised, old sail or modern steam.

The steamship is a more useful servant doubtless. Does she breed better men or worse? I wasn't there when "'Fulton's Folly' steamed grandly along," but I saw a faithful reproduction of her on the Hudson and in beauty and romance it left something to be desired, just as did the earliest automobiles—and most of the modern ones, however useful.

This question of their relative merits is about as big a one as we can find—so many-sided that it sends one straying off in all directions, as I have been doing. Yet perhaps one reason I wander so is that what I am really thinking about is a full-rigged ship, tall and stately in silent moonlight on a silent sea, of other ships of sail, bright in the sun or gray in the wind.

When most of our cargoes are carried through the air I wonder whether we shall look back on the good old days of steam upon the waters when men *were* men, enduring primitive hardships, when romance was abroad in the world, before the picturesque steamship had given way to the more practical but less graceful ship of the air?

Go to it, Comrade Black and Comrade Bill. Both of you are right.

Sacramento, California.

Dear Bill: I have a right to (and did) tattoo a pig on my foot before I was seventeen years old—of course being an old shell-back you know what that means—but for the benefit of some that don't, it means "to cross the 'line'," just to let you know I have been to sea.

Some sailor, please note "sailor," must have shown you where the dead marine was buried to so sour you against the Navy. You know I can't understand how we ever got our troops to France without losing a man when I am positive some of us didn't know the difference between a "topgallant" and a "cross-jack," and I even know of one who couldn't box a compass. But we got there just the same.

But why, Bill, did you pick on the young men? Why didn't you get one that had an apprentice mark on his sleeve? *There* is a man that has been before the mast and will meet you on your own ground. And while we are before the mast, I can recall from the dim past of forgotten history that the U. S. N. had a couple of old "windjammers" that existed on the very fare you mentioned and could lick —— out of anybody!

I sigh when I think what a glorious sight it would have been for to see the mighty armada you named sailing proudly to France, but oh, what a crash when a torpedo eased gently into her "invincible" wooden hull!

Also from the forgotten history-books looms a picture of "Fulton's Folly" steaming grandly along while our hard-bitten, tarry, pigtailed "sailors," sons of Neptune all, dived frantically below decks—ah, noble sons of the restless sea, what an inspiring sight!

Yeh, Bill, those oxen-teams looked romantic but, like you, they can't compete with modern methods of transportation.

But all due credit to you, noble champion of lost causes and "salt horse." But snap into it, Bill.

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This is 1922, not 1882. Live in the present, not the past!

Yours for 6%,
J. R. BLACK.

P. S.—By the way, did you "rum-guzzling foremast" hands ever "guzzle" deck shellac strained through bread?

P.P.S.—Also that barbed shaft at "credit to his glorious country"—ask the guy that was directed at, which side of the topgallant to clew up first, also how to get the water out of the lee scupper. Come on, Bill, ask him. He'll tell you he isn't any youngster just off the farm.—J. R. B.

ON THE chance that some of you may have failed, as I did, to see a notice of the death in question, here is the letter that called my attention to it:

July 18th, 1923.
Houston, Texas.

You might overlook the press notices of the death of John W. Poe at Roswell, N. M., Tuesday evening. He was president of the Citizens' National Bank there and you will at once recall his early activities; the average reader will probably remember him as one of Pat Garrett's deputies. Poe was a fine man and loyal to his friends.—W. T. HALL.

FROM one of the members of the old original American Legion started by our Camp-Fire back in 1914, the organization that passed its name on to the present American Legion. It is strange to remember how the Army and Navy Departments not only gave no help to that first practical step toward Preparedness but forbade Army and Navy officers from extending their help and did all they could to discourage it in the days when we were "too proud to fight." I remember when Secretary Daniels' telegram literally took Commander Crank out of the Legion offices, how Captains (then) Kilbourne and Johnston were similarly taken off the work. I remember how the Washington authorities actually refused to receive or use the Legion's valuable records of men available for various skilled services, and how difficult it was to prevail upon them even to "file" those records. The same records that, when the war did come to us, were used over and over again by various Departments and Bureaus at Washington! Washington was not only too proud to fight and too something-or-other to make even elementary preparation against the chance of being compelled to, but even worked against those private citizens who tried to do the Administration's duty for it.

Only the clear-sightedness and iron determination of General Leonard Wood, strongly backed by Theodore Roosevelt and others, carried the old American Legion through and enabled it to force upon Washington its cross-indexed records of twenty-odd thousand men ready for instant service and specially equipped in the many highly specialized trades and professions needed in war. With encouragement, or even non-interference, from the Wilson Administration, instead of definite opposition, the old American Legion, riding high on a wave of enthusiasm when the papers from coast to coast spread the idea before the people, would have swept the country. With an indexed and systematized enrolment of hundreds of thousands it would have saved much of the highly inefficient scrambling and confusion when the crisis came. And would therefore have saved many of the bloody and costly results of that inefficiency in emergency.

Doubtless they meant well, those blunderers, but there is American blood on their well-meaning but blundering hands. Now we have a Republican instead of a Democratic Administration, if that means anything except a change in dividers of the loot. And still we have official indifference—or opposition—to sane preparation against the hour of need, our office-holding politicians having little eye for anything beyond party interests or personal advancement.

Militarism, no; War, no; not if it can be avoided by utmost effort. But it is a peculiarity of war that it can *not* always be avoided. Does it further the cause of peace to be caught helpless by some nation that does not want peace?

Whatever technical machinery may or may not be resorted to, the fact remains that this country can best make its voice heard for world peace by being strong enough to make the other nations listen. The mailed fist, no. But the strong arm, friendly if allowed to be, that can nevertheless deal a staggering blow if forced to it. A war-seeking nation respects nothing else. The weaker the other fellow, the more likely it is to force war on him.

So I am very glad to give space to this plea for the Officers' Reserve Corps:

MANILA, P. I.

I have seen considerable discussion in the Camp-Fire in recent months, regarding the present military condition and policy of the United States. Reference has also been made to the work of the

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old American Legion, and the efforts that we made in the direction of preparedness, in the days before the World War. I wonder, however, if the rank and file of the old Legion know that the work we tried to carry out in an unofficial manner is now being handled by that section of the Army called the Officers' Reserve Corps.

THE Officers' Reserve Corps is today carrying out in an efficient manner the things we dreamed of in the old days, but the great handicap of the Reserve Corps today is the fact that so few people understand its purpose. Here is a place where the old Legionaries may be of great service, for they thoroughly understand the principles of the Reserve Corps and can do yeoman service in helping the spread of the ideas and the needs of the Corps.

It should also be remembered that there are hundreds of the ex-Legionaries, who are eligible for commissions in the Officers' Reserve Corps, but who from lack of knowledge haven't as yet made application.

With the Officers' Reserve Corps brought up to the strength contemplated at the time of its formation, it will be the framework upon which an Army may be built within a very short period of time, avoiding the profitless confusion of misdirected effort which we suffered from in the early days of the World War.

By intelligent propaganda, in behalf of the Officers' Reserve Corps, we will be helping to realize in concrete form the old ideals of the American Legion. Full information may be obtained from the Adjutant General's Office at Washington, at any military post and from members of the Reserve Officers' Association.—An Old Legionary.—W. H. DOUGLAS.

WHEN in a recent Camp-Fire we printed parts of the Constitution of the United States the printer in one place substituted "violated" for "inviolate" and none of us caught the error. Those who wrote in about it had guessed how it happened, but our apologies are due for the error.

In the light of one letter that came in, it might be as well, also to state that my own introductory remarks in presenting the Constitution were ironical and not to be taken at their face meaning and that I am for the Constitution, not against it. The writer of the letter seemed to think I was staging a violent attack on it. I might have known that sarcasm and irony are always likely to be mistaken by somebody for direct statement.—A. S. H.

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

Keepers answer letters only if they wish. For local information write "Ask Adventure."

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

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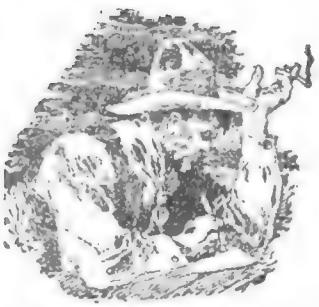

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2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
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33. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 424, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

34. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 424, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information.

35. Central America
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

36. Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. WHITAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

37. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. MAHAFFEY, So. Pac. Extra Gang 21, S. P. Depot, San Francisco, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan; Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

38. ✠ Canada Part 1 Height of Land and Northern Quebec
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Also Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern Ungava and Keewatin. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

39. ✠ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping, aviation. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

40. ✠ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario
GEORGE L. CATTON, 94 Metcalfe St., Woodstock, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. *Postage 3 cents.*)

41. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District
T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

42. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta
ED. L. CARSON, Monroe, Wash. Including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

43. ✠ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin
REECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

44. ✠ Canada Part 7 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

45. Alaska
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1436 Hawthorne Terrace, Berkeley, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

46. Baffinland and Greenland
VICTOR SHAW, Shaw Mines Corp., Silverton, Colo. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

47. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

48. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico
H. F. ROBINSON, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance, oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.

49. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.
FRANK MIDDLETON, 705 So. 1st St., Laramie, Wyo. Geography, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and outdoor life in general.

50. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains
CHESTER C. DAVIS, Helena, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

51. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country
OTTO M. JONES, Warden, Bureau of Fish and Game, Boise, Idaho. Camping, shooting, fishing equipment, information on expeditions, outdoor photography, history and inhabitants.

✠ (*Readers addressed envelop with three cents in stamps—in Mr. Beadle's case twelve cents—NOT attached*)

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52. **Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.**
J. W. WHITAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

53. **Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.**
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

54. **Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.**
JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), Editor *National Sportsman*, 275 Newbury St., Boston, Mass. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

55. **Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan**
JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), Editor *National Sportsman*, 275 Newbury St., Boston, Mass. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

56. **Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River**
GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See next section.*)

57. **Eastern U. S. Part 1 Miss., O., Tenn., Michigan and Hudson Valleys, Great Lakes, Adirondacks**
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Automobile, motor-cycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boating, river-tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs.

58. **Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers**
HOWARD A. SHANNON, care *Adventure*. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

59. **Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville**
HOWARD A. SHANNON, care *Adventure*. Okefinokee and Dismal, Okeranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

60. **Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians**
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 424, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Alleghanies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

61. **Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala. Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.**
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Box 432, Orlando, Fla. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

62. **Eastern U. S. Part 6 Maine**
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main St., Bangor, Me. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

A.—Radio

DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

VICTOR SHAW, Shaw Mines Corp., Silverton, Colo. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads —songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should not be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—**All Shotguns,** including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), Editor *National Sportsman*, 275 Newbury Street, Boston, Mass.

2.—**All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers,** including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—**Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800,** Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), Editor *National Sportsman*, 275 Newbury St., Boston, Mass. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Tropical Forestry

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 424, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

G.—Aviation

MAJOR W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR., General Airways System, Inc., Duryea Bldg., Connecticut Ave. at L. St., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

H.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

FRED F. FLEISCHER, 464 Park Avenue, West New York, N. J. *United States:* Military history, Military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. *Foreign:* Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general, "Ask Adventure" section. *General:* Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command.

H.—STANDING INFORMATION

For **Camp-Fire Stations** write J. COX, care *Adventure*.

For general information on **U. S.** and its **possessions,** write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash. D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For **U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries,** the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico,** and customs receivers-ships in **Santo Domingo** and **Haiti,** the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For **Alaska,** the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For **Hawaii,** Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba,** Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For **R. C. M. P.,** Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **Canal Zone,** the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National Rifle Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States Revolver Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Washington, D. C.

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Kangaroo and Buffalo Hunting

BIG game of Australia:

Question:—"A friend of mine with myself would like to sample big-game in northern Australia. We are used to firearms of all descriptions and out-of-door life, having shot over the whole of Victoria (small game, etc.).

Our present equipment consists of two .32 Winchester repeaters, two .22 Remington repeaters, two 12-gage double-barreled shot-guns, two .32 Smith & Wesson revolvers, two sheath knives, two large pack-knives, two small rabbit knives, with sufficent equipment for camping after rabbits in Victoria.

I would like to know what districts in New South Wales are open for kangaroos and where are they the most plentiful? The same information in regard to Queensland? Does the buffalo still exist in the Gulf country? Can a man pay his way with skins in any of the three States—N. S. W., Q. and Northern Territory? Kangaroos in preference. Is the .32 rifle large enough for kangaroos, or would .44 be more suitable?

Would .44 damage the skins?

Any information whatever would be gladly received. Please don't use my name or address for publication."

Answer, by Mr. Morton:—As you doubtless know, a man's report on a district depends altogether on the luck he has in it, so that you must be prepared for contradictions when you inquire.

The big 'roos are pretty well thinned out everywhere, but they still give good sport away back from the railways and more settled centers in New England and up Darling Downs way. The .32 rifle in good hands is well enough. If you go north of Darling Downs hold on to your .44. Sporting fellows here tell me there's no reason why the .44 should damage the skins if in the right hands.

Buffalo in the Gulf country? Yes, but more in the Northern Territory, which is better country for that sport all round.

The alligator are troublesome all about there, and you need to be particularly careful at the water-holes. Chap came down here to hospital a few weeks ago, horribly mauled. He was standing by a water-hole at dusk, and a 'gator rushed and got him before he had time to turn. He was dragged right to deep water, but kept his head and made a desperate fight for it. By miraculous good fortune he succeeded in blinding the brute, which let go. Case of a game and cool man getting across with a one-in-a-thousand chance. Alligator said to have been a 14-footer.

They got the injured men with a lot of trouble into Darwin, but he was so badly hurt and the tears were so slow to heal that they brought him right round here by sea. He has got through, but his scars are a warning to others.

Up in India where I was you can take pretty well any chance with the crocodiles, but with the alligators in our North you can take simply no risks at all.

Apart from snakes and the —— mosquitoes I think the alligator is Northern Australia's only ferocious beast. A buffalo will be ugly when he's pushed, but the cooler head wins.

I don't know how the average buffaloes run for size, because I never met a buffalo-hunter who wasn't an outrageous liar. But the first buffalo were brought over from the Malay Peninsula, and I've seen sladang up there that have seemed to be the biggest animals of their class. There is a mighty head in the Singapore Club that seems too big to be true.

You seem to have equipment enough for a gun-boat. Why not write to the *Queenslander* in Brisbane? It makes rather a specialty of your sort of queries. Good luck.

The full statement of the sections in this department, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

With Gold-Pan and Cradle in California

OPPORTUNITIES in working gravel bars and pocket seams; in crevicing and "gouging:"

Question:—"These enclosed questions are the outcome of a plan which I have decided to carry out in the near future, and my main and fundamental idea is as follows:

I want to get away from the crowds and the city life and go on a prospecting-trip for a little gold.

I would like if possible to get to some river where gold could be got out of its bed or from along the banks, and work the metal from the dirt by a cradle or pan. I do not expect ever to strike a rich place, but if I could get the gold in the above manner and pick up about one-half ounce to an ounce a day, I would be highly satisfied.

The same method I would like to apply to some old abandoned claim if this would be possible and permissible.

I shall take the train from my home town, then to New York City, from there to Chicago and thence to the city or town that is nearest to the gold-field that would be best for amateur prospecting. In this town I shall outfit for a six months' trip, and if things go anyway well I shall continue at this game.

Which is the best State and place for an amateur to do a little gold-prospecting in the United States?

Where and how should I prospect?

Are there any streams or rivers where gold could be taken from the banks or beds and washed out by the pan or cradle method?

How should I outfit for a prospecting-trip covering about five or six months?

Could you give the general geology necessary for a gold-prospector to know?

Would it be possible for me to work some abandoned claim? I hear that some Chinese are doing this in California, and are getting $2.75 per day in gold.

Do you think $1,100 would be enough money to start in with?

Do you know of any good books on gold-prospecting that an amateur could read to get an idea of how to go about this business?

If to answer all these questions fully would take up too much room in your reply, I will be glad to send you self-addressed envelops and sufficient postage to cover the mailing of the complete answering of the questions and any other information you might care to give me.

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Please let me know if this arrangement will be satisfactory. If this is published in *Adventure* kindly omit my name and address."

Answer, by Mr. Shaw:—Your plan is O. K.; but you'll be extremely lucky—with the accent on the "*luck*"—if you find a place where you can "pick up half an ounce a day." Ten dollars a day is mighty good wages, and the country would soon be flooded with prospectors if one could be assured of that amount, and other industries in the country would suffer in consequence from labor shortage. Any placer that will produce half an ounce a day with pan or cradle is an exceptional one, and rich enough to warrant machinery for more extensive work.

In California, however, there are many places where you may make pretty fair wages by working gravel bars on rivers and creeks, or by crevicing and working pocket seams in idle mines. Numbers of men are doing this who do not own the mines. They are patented and closed down, and the owners do not see them from one year's end to another. Sometimes you can get permission for such work or obtain a lease, and often you can go on the property to work and no one will bother you. You locate rich seams and "gouge" these, selecting and hand-sorting your ore, which you can have crushed and shipped in small lots. This is, of course, for rich quartz ores.

Now for the placers: Much of California's placer production comes from dredging or hydraulicking. One of the best counties for gold-dredging is Yuba County in the Oroville, or Feather River district. The next most prolific perhaps is the American River field in Sacramento County. California placers produce nearly half the total gold output of the State. There is some "drift" placering in Butte County at Chico, Forbestown, Magalia, Nimshew, Stirling City, etc.; some hydraulic placers (small) in Humboldt County at Eureka, Orleans, Willow Creek, etc.; "sluice" placers in Eldorado County, at Clarksville, Georgetown, Lotus and Omo Ranch; also at Placerville. There are a few surface-sluicing placers in Kern County at Cantil, Isabella and Randsburg; at Coulterville and Jerseydale in Mariposa County; at Dutch Flat, French Corral, Relief, Nevada City and Washington in Nevada County; at Portola, Seneca; La Porte, Spring Garden, Meadow Valley, etc., in Plumas County; a few small sluicers at Gas Point and Lamoine in Shasta County; drift placers at Downieville, Forest, Goodyear's Bar, Pike, Scales, Table Rock, etc., in Sierra County; on the Trinity River at McAtee Bar, Burnt Ranch, in the New River district, Weaverville, and Carrville, in Trinity County.

The above all have producing placer mines, but will give you a good idea of the localities where placer may be found, and by getting into some of them and trying out the various creeks you have a chance of at least making wages. Your stake of $1,100 will be ample for such work for two men for a year if you go at it with discretion. I believe I'd hit Randsburg, Kern County, first, and you'll get a fair locality from which you can branch out as you learn the country at first hand. I enclose two of my articles on prospecting, which contain replies to all your other questions. Note the book by West.

Anything further which you may wish to know I'll answer to the best of my ability on request. If you wish I'll give you data and sketches of pan, cradle and sluice-box, with method of using.

Hope you go and make good; you'll have adventure and a bully time however you may come out. You'll find California enjoyable and the climate excellent.

Upon receiving the above information, Mr. Shaw's inquirer wrote him again as follows:

Question:—"Thanks for your recent replies to my questions. I have about decided to do a little placer mining, and would be very much obliged if you could give me some data and sketches of pan, cradle and sluice-box, with method of operating, as well as a little light on the following questions:

1. What would two pack-horses or burros cost?
2. Do you happen to know the names of any experienced prospectors whom one could form a partnership with?
3. Is the beginning or middle of August too late to start on placer mining?
4. What kind of a lamp is best for camping, and would coal oil or carbid be the best to use?"

Answer, by Mr. Shaw:—I'm glad you have the initiative (society term for "guts") to really get out and fly at it. If you have an idea in your head the only sensible thing is to work it out, and no man ever got anywhere by gazing forever over the edge of the rut he has worn for himself and longing to go somewhere or do something. Go ahead and tackle it; the experience alone will be well worth the time and cash expended. Keep your eyes and ears open, your mouth shut, and hew to the line and you'll get results—far better, I believe, than if you grubbed along in the same old rut all your life.

The above advice is unsolicited, and perhaps you'll consider it none of my affair; but it's the way I feel, and I get all worked up at times because the square peg insists in staying in the round hole. The spirit you show is all that accounts for the settling of our Western States and the creation of the greatest nation on earth in the short space of 147 years.

Now for your additional questions:

1. The price of pack-animals depends much on your locality. I've bought burros at $2 a head and Indian ponies at $10, both in southwestern Colorado and New Mexico. You should be able to pick up fairly good pack-horses for around $25 and burros at $5. I'd get an average good saddle-horse, and almost any sort of animal will do as a pack-animal if it is sound in leg and has no disease, fistula, etc. If you enter the desert you will need one animal for water. In any case don't get the tin canteens; get a number of bags (Apple brand) which pack O. K. and keep your water cool when hung in the shade.

2. I can't recommend any one just now. When you get into whatever section you select you can doubtless pick up some one. Your own good sense will be a guide as to the man's character. I've met up with many old-timers, broke, down-at-the-heel old confirmed prospectors, who are the salt of the earth in character and who will give you the shirt off their backs, or their lives in a crisis, just because you are their "podner." They know the game, too.

The time you mention is O. K., especially in California. In Alaska it would be a trifle late to get into

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the timber and get located for the Winter; but you could do it if you found it impossible to start earlier.

4. Carbid, with a carbid lamp is best, if you can keep your carbid dry; also, if you'll be where you can renew the carbid if necessary. For going deep into the wilder sections, far from town or rails, I prefer candles with the patent tin case made in the shape of a lantern. These are cheap and fold into small space. There is no danger of dampness, accidents in canoe or boat, or of spilling-loss as might be with carbid.

I am enclosing rough sketches of placer apparatus, per your request, with simple directions for use. If I were in your place and seriously considered getting out into the mining country, I'd spend $7 with McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., 10th Ave. and 36th St., N. Y. C., for the "Mining Engineer's Handbook," by Robert Peele. It is compact, being only 4 x 7 inches and 2½ inches thick; but it has 2,300 pages of practical information. Really it is the whole of a course of mining with geology, mineralogy, mining methods, etc., with mathematics, all the different sorts of mining machinery and a section on placer mining, placer methods and placer machinery, comprising 76 pages.

Peele is a book you can take into camp and study nights and on rainy days and get a mighty good mining education in a short time without the aid of any other books. It was only compiled by Peele, and the various sections are written by professors in technical colleges and by noted consulting engineers, so the material is the same as you would get in any text-book on the subject. But in addition the book gives up-to-date information on actual mines and localities with drawings to illustrate, and tables to show results of actual work.

In addition to the section on placer that I mentioned, there is another section on prospecting and exploration (67 pages) which includes all kinds of placer-prospecting methods. There is no single book of which I know, that will give you the service of this one, and it is not written in a style hard to comprehend, either. You'll really be getting a whole technical library for the price of $7.

Tiger Rifles

SIAM is the place for the quarry. Gordon MacCreagh would possibly have something to add about the country if he were asked, for it is in his "A. A." territory:

Question:—"I am going to the kingdom of Siam for an oil company and would like to get all the data possible, such as climate, health, customs, fish, game; and are the people friendly to Americans?

How do the people dress? What kind of guns if any would be the right kind to take in for game?"—J. B. East, Von Army, Tex.

Answer, by Capt. Giddings:—I can not undertake to answer all your questions, not only because Siam is not in my territory, but because your queries are too general and cover too much ground.

However, there is splendid hunting in Siam, notably for tigers; and I recommend as a rifle our old reliable friend, the 1895 model .405 Winchester, fitted with Lyman No. 35 peep-sight. See that the rifle is equipped with shotgun butt and that it comes in the solid-frame variety. No better tiger rifle was ever made.

Trapping Near Mt. Katahdin

NO MONEY in it:

Question:—"Would it pay to make a trip to the territory around the northwestern part of Mt. Katahdin for the purpose of trapping, this Winter?

What would be the approximate cost of a complete outfit including grub and cost of hiring a guide if the latter is necessary?

What would a hunting and trapping license cost, and where could we get a good map of the locality?

How long a trap-line do you think two young fellows, nineteen and twenty-two, could take care of?

We are both fairly at home in the woods.

Any other information which you have which would be of value to us would be most gratefully received."—W. J. Bates, New York.

Answer, by Dr. Hatherne:—I can say most emphatically that the trip you are thinking of to the vicinity of Mt. Katahdin for trapping would not pay; most of that territory is closed to hunting, it having been recently made a State game preserve.

All non-residents must employ a registered guide when hunting or fishing and building fires on the wild lands of the State. A hunting-license for non-residents costs $15 and a trapping-license $20.

E. Dillingham of Bangor publishes a good map of the hunting and fishing region of northern Maine; the cost is $1.

The length of a trap-line two young fellows could take care of would depend largely on the country they trapped in, the amount of grit they had and the sort of a Winter they were up against.

Take my advice and forget the trapping scheme; but a trip to Maine for a few weeks' hunting would be worth all it costs. This is the best dope I can give you.

What a Bull-Fight Is Like

A DESCRIPTION of the national sport of Mexico—and indeed of all Spanish as well as Portuguese speaking countries:

Question:—"I am greatly interested in bull-fights in Mexico and am writing this letter in the hope that you can tell me something about them. I would appreciate a description of one if you can oblige me. I obtained your name and address from 'Ask Adventure.'"—James M. Freeland, Tonkawa, Okla.

Answer, by Mr. Mahaffey:—This sport is indulged in quite frequently in almost all the large cities and towns of Mexico. The fights are given on Sundays and *fiestas*, or feast days. The place where they are given is called the Plaza de Toros and is usually a large, circular arena with rows of seats surrounding it. It has no roof, and sometimes seats thousands of people.

Encircling the arena is a high fence or barrier with a footrail about eighteen inches from the ground, behind which the bull-fighters hide when the bull gets too close to them, landing in an open space between this high fence and the wall of the amphitheater.

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The opening of the performance is very brilliant and exciting. There are usually thousands of spectators, as many as fifteen to twenty thousand, all eager for the fight. Gay colors are everywhere, bands playing the liveliest airs, and all is excitement. The feelings of an American under the circumstances are those of amazement and anxious expectation.

There is a grand flourish of trumpets; a gaily caparisoned horseman dashes in and gallops to the President's box and a key is thrown to him; it is the key of the door leading to the pens where the bulls are kept. The horseman catches the key—wo be to him if he doesn't!—gallops back to the entrance and disappears; if the key is not caught the man is hissed out of the ring. Another flourish of trumpets and wild cheers announce the entrance of the bull-fighters.

It is indeed a brilliant spectacle, the *matador*, *capeadores* and *banderilleros* on foot and *picadores* on horseback, all clad in the gayest colors, in all colors and covered with gold and silver embroidery. They march to the President's box. The President is a municipal or State official, and has full charge of the fight. He is saluted by the company, and the fight is about to commence.

Now the wildest excitement prevails and the scene is a perfect picture of pandemonium. All eyes are turned toward the low, strong doors where the bulls are kept, under the bandstand.

The doors are thrown open, and from a darkened pen a bull dashes forth into the arena. As he passes under the rail a steel barb with ribbons attached showing the colors of the breeder is fastened into his shoulder. He gallops to the middle of the ring and looks about with fear and astonishment.

He is a grand-looking beast. Surprize and fear give way to rage; he paws the earth and snorts in his frenzy, and, discovering the red cloak of the *espada*, starts toward him on the run. The man jumps over the fence, but not too quickly, for he has hardly disappeared before the bull's horns hit the boards of the fence.

The bull turns and spies a horse, and wo be to the horse, for his day has come. The *picador* with his lance is totally unable to keep the bull from goring the horse, and it is killed on the spot. The horses are not valuable ones, being old veterans retired from service and fattened to friskiness for this occasion. They are blindfolded and ridden in to certain death.

Another man is chased out of the ring and another horse killed or wounded. A signal from the President, and a bugle call directs the horses to be removed.

Now comes the really interesting part of the performance—the thrusting of the *banderillas*. The bull is alone with his tormentors; it is a contest between skill and brute strength. A *banderilla* is a stick about two and a half feet long; on the end is a very sharp barbed point, similar to that of a fish-hook, only straight. The stick is covered on its entire length with gaily colored ribbons and tissue paper.

The *banderillero* is the man who places them in the bull's shoulders. He must stand in front of the animal without cloak or flag, must stand still and wait the attack.

The bull, maddened at his audacity, dashes toward him at full speed. The man steps out of the way gracefully and skilfully thrusts the *banderillas* into the bull's shoulders. Usually two are thrust in at the same time, one being held in each hand.

As soon as the animal can check his mad rush he turns, now furious with rage, only to find another *banderillero* with two more *banderillas*. These and two more are thrust into his shoulders, all hanging free. Bellowing now, he is wild.

Another signal from the President indicates that the bull has had enough and now must be killed. This is where the *matador*, the *primer espada*, distinguishes himself. His skilful killing of the bull with a single thrust is what determines the brilliancy of the star. The *matador* must stand, sword in hand, and await the attack. It is assassination to strike while the bull is at rest and calls for hisses and missiles from the audience.

The blood-red cloth or *muleta* is flaunted in front of the bull. The maddened animal closes his eyes and makes one more dash for life and falls in death. The sword of the *matador* is thrust between the shoulders to the hilt and has pierced the animal's heart.

Wild bursts of applause fill the air; hats, canes, cigars by the bushel are thrown in the ring by the delighted spectators; men shout and sing and ladies wave their handkerchiefs and *mantillas*. The *matador* bows his acknowledgments and throws the hats and canes back to their owners, who seem grateful that he should thus honor them.

The band plays, the gates open and three gaudily decorated mules harnessed abreast enter the ring. A rope is thrown over the dead bull's horns, and he is dragged out.

The wait between the acts is not more than a minute; the bugle calls, the doors open and another bull gallops in and the whole performance is repeated until six are killed, which makes up a complete bull-fight. The skill and agility of the bull-fighters are remarkable, and consist in holding the red cloth in such a way that the bull rushes at it instead of at the bull-fighter. The bull shuts his eyes and does not see the man as he sidesteps and thus escapes the bull's rush; but often the man must save his life by a jump over the fence, or around the ends.

The performance is called the *funcion*. The best seats are on the shady side, called *sombra;* those on the sunny side are called *en el sol* and are cheaper. Seats in the shade are generally from $2 to $6 silver; boxes from $12 to $20 silver.

The star fighter is the *matador* or *espada*. He it is who finally kills the bull with his sword.

The *banderillero* is the man who places the *banderillas* in the bull's shoulders. The little plait of hair or *cue* worn by professional bull-fighters means that the wearer has reached the grade of *banderillero*. If he commits any offense against the ethics of the bull-fighter's code his cue is cut off in public and he is forever disgraced.

The *picador* is the man on horseback. He does not stay there long after the entrance of the bull, but while he does he goads the bull with a pike or lance, this being a pole with a steel point.

The *capeadores* are the men who flaunt the capes or cloaks in front of the bull. The *muleta* is the red cloth used by the *matador* when he kills the bull, and the *cachetero* is the man who puts the finishing dagger stroke between the horns; and when he has done so six times—if there are six bulls—the bull-fight is history.

The sword used by the *matador* is straight, two-edged and about thirty inches long, sometimes longer, according to the ideas of its user.

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Railroads of Czecho-Slovakia

AGAIN it is necessary to caution inquirers to make their questions specific. See rule four, printed on the first page of this department. Mr. Fleischer didn't have to answer this question, but out of the goodness of his heart he did:

Question.—"As I have been told that you can tell me of the traveling and living conditions of Czecho-Slovakia I am writing and asking you to please let me know."—(Miss) DORIS COX, Eastland, Tex.

Answer, by Mr. Fleischer:—Although your letter is rather vague as to the exact information you desire, I presume that you want to know about the railroads of the Czecho-Slovakian Republic and about how the inhabitants live.

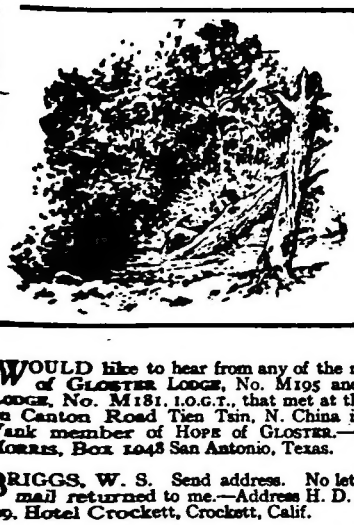
When President Mazaryk signed the declaration of independance in 1918 the railroads, which at that time were property of the defunct Austrian Empire, were taken over by the new Government; and those—very few—in private hands did not change owners.

Due to the demands made on the roads during the war for transporting men and material both rolling-stock and roadbeds deteriorated, and only recently have express trains been supplied with new cars. Repairs have been made to the roadbeds, and same are now in good condition.

There are at present five trunk lines and a great number of connecting lines. The principal artery of travel is the two-spur line coming into the territory of the republic from Dresden along the shores of the river Elbe and following the river Moldau into Prague, then south through Budweis into Austria to Vienna. Another road leads from Eger in the northwest—connections with Leipzig in Saxony—south to Pilsen. From there the lines connect to the east with the first-mentioned line as well as south to Budweis. That part of the old Vienna-Oderberg road which leads through Czech lands is managed by the republic.

Of course in the larger cities people live as we do, but in smaller villages the buildings are picturesque hamlets, built in the century-old styles of the particular counties. In some counties, especially in the part which formerly belonged to Hungary, the peasants as well as the cows and hogs and chickens live under one roof.

I am enclosing a leaflet which will give you more information about Czecho-Slovakia.



LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

WOULD like to hear from any of the members of HOPE of GLOSTER LODGE, No. M195 and RORKES DRIFT LODGE, No. M181, I.O.G.T., that met at the Soldiers' Home on Canton Road Tien Tsin, N. China in 1914. I am a Yank member of HOPE of GLOSTER.—Address HARVEY MORRIS, Box 1048 San Antonio, Texas.

BRIGGS, W. S. Send address. No letter at Cooks', my mail returned to me.—Address H. D. MITCHELL, Room 309, Hotel Crockett, Crockett, Calif.

FULLER, CHARLES. Last heard from in Missouri, operating grocery store. Any information will be appreciated by his daughter.—Address HELEN FULLER, 812 8th St., Sioux City, Iowa.

GARLICK, Clyde W. Please return home. I need you. Write and give me some address.—MOTHER.

COURTLAND, GOODWIN. Please write your old buddy. Any other buddy who served in Company A 8th Inf. in Coblenz who knows me write me a line also.—H. J. GRAY, 33 Lindel St., Haverhill, Mass.

TANKERSLEY or TANKUSHY, ISAAC. Went to California in the gold rush of forty-nine. Last heard from he was going to Georgia. Had half-brother by the name of Hugh Lawson White Smith, who was born in Dahlonega, Ga. Any information will be appreciated by his niece.—Address MRS. BERTHA DYKEMA, 1737 W. 5th St., Texarkana, Texas.

CELENTANO, D. (Celly). Formerly of U. S. S. *Curlew.* Drop a line to your buddy.—Address FRED G. TAYLOR, Brunswick Hotel, Port Arthur, Texas.

A LIST of unclaimed manuscripts will be published in the January 20th and July 20th issues of Adventure, and a list of unclaimed mail will be published in the last issue of each month.

COOPER, JAMES. Age forty-five years. Last heard from in Illinois twenty-three years ago. Any information will be appreciated by his sister.—Address MRS. S. R. CURRY, Sand Springs, Okla.

LAWRENCE, JOSEPH SIMON. Age twenty, five feet, eight inches, light brown hair, gray eyes. Expert telegrapher. Last heard of in Campbellton, New Brunswick, in 1919. Any information will be appreciated.—Address R. RAY LAWRENCE, 405 Jarvis St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

JOHNSON, THEODORE, (Toady). Last heard from was in Batavia, N. Y. Please write to your old pal.—Address HARRY V. GAGE, Naval Hospital, Portamouth, New Hampshire.

MILLER, FLOYD CHESTER. Age twenty years. Adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Miller in Washington fifteen years ago. His father's name was Wynne Bullock, monumental stone cutter by trade. Last known address Albuquerque, New Mexico, letter sent there but returned marked unclaimed. Any information will be appreciated by his sister.—Address GRACE TORRESON, 107 E. Providence, Spokane, Wash.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the February 10th issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

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WILDERMAN, ARTHUR. Last heard of in Los Angeles, Calif., was traveling the Pacific Coast in Merchant Marine. Any information will be appreciated.—Address OSCAR WILDERMAN, 1316 State St., Flint, Mich.

BYRON, William. Last heard of in the Canary Islands. Any information will be appreciated.—Address R. H. COUTANT, Puerta Castillo, Spanish Honduras, C. A.

LEASK, THOMAS. Seaman. Height about five feet seven inches, light complexion, brown eyes, heavy build. Last seen in Seattle, Wash., about four years ago.—Address JOSEPH HUNTER, 1152 Chapman St., Victoria, B. C., Canada.

CULBERTSON, L. CARROLL. (Known as "Cul.") Where are you? Please write to Art and Mac.—Address A. P. BARBER, 1443 Linden Ave., Long Beach, Calif.

NELSON, CHARLES. Worked at ST. ELIZABETH HOSPITAL, Dayton, Ohio in 1914. Was working on the horse transports during the war. Any information will be appreciated.—Address CHAS. B. KEENE, 2143 N. New Jersey St., Indianapolis, Ind.

A COMPLETE list of unclaimed mail will be published in December 20th and June 20th issues of Adventure.

C. E. GEO. Please write to me. Everything O. K.—Address J. E. COOLEY, Box 236, Littleton, Ala.

THE following have been inquired for in either the October 20th or November 20th issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine:

ANSELL, Edward Clarence T.; Ashton, George H.; Averson, Charles Henry; Bagby, Oliver Halbert; Beyer, Louis; Christian, Olive; Courtland, Goodwin; Devere, Raymond; Estes, L. B.; Haney, Lillian and Jack; Hankins, O. D.; Hart, Allan J.; Herbert, Frank Jackson, Jack H.; Kane, Thomas C.; Mack, Joseph F.; Manning, Willard; May C. B.; Mauch, Joseph B.; Renner, Walter J.; Scott, R. E. or Estill; Semple, James Lithgow; Shepard, Harold North; Smythe, Arnold; Snowden, E.; Spinks, John L.; Trask, Willard; Whitmore, I. W.; Verney, Joe.

MISCELLANEOUS—Would like to hear from the old-timers that hit the trails up the Republican River or Platte or Old Missouri Rivers, up Fort Bend.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

R. W. B., JR. Who left home March 17th, 1923. Will not interfere with your plans. Please write us where you are. We must hear fom you.—"GLOOM."

THE TRAIL AHEAD

DECEMBER 20TH ISSUE

Besides the **four complete novelettes** mentioned on the second page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE HELMSMEN OF THE *HARPER* — ***Bill Adams***

They held the square-rigger on her storming way, the chaplain guiding her, the crimp taking the heave of her wheel.

ACCORDING TO NG LOY An Off-the-Trail Story* — ***W. C. Tuttle***

Luck in the West.

STANDISH OF THE STAR Y A Five-Part Story Part IV — ***Gordon Young***

Cowmen *versus* nesters.

AIN'T THAT OUR LUCK? — ***Clements Ripley***

Fighting in the Philippines complicated by an Army mule.

THE RESCUE VALIANT — ***Thomas Topham***

It's hard to stand on an iceberg.

AT PENDER'S GAP — ***Howard Ellis Davis***

A mountaineer conspiracy.

**See footnote at bottom of first contents page.*

Still Farther Ahead

IN THE three issues following the next there will be *long stories*, by Arthur O. Friel, Arthur D. Howden Smith, Garrard Harris, W. Townend, Leonard H. Nason, Barry Scobee, Frederick Moore, W. C. Tuttle, Karl W. Detzer, Hugh Pendexter, Gordon Young and Conroy Kroder; and short stories by Raymond S. Spears, Thomas Topham, William Byron Mowery, John Eyton, George E. Holt, E. S. Pladwell, Gordon MacCreagh and others—stories of the jungle, the cattle country, the frontier, the Gulf, the high seas, the Lakes, the war, the Andes, the oil-fields, Indians, vikings, soldiers, cowboys, sailors; of adventurers all the world around.

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Wild Flower.
Barney Google.
Carolina in the Morning.
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Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Shean.
I Love Me.
Parade of the Wooden Soldiers.
Sun Kist Rose.
You Know You Belong to Somebody Else.

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Mellow Moon.

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